The Dissertation Committee for Nadya Yurievna Clayton Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

From the Aesthete to the Pedagogue: The Yasnaya Polyana Peasant School as the Experimental Laboratory for Tolstoy's Creative Transformation

Committee:

Tatiana Kuzmic, Supervisor

Keith Livers

Gilbert Rappaport

John Kolsti

Aaron Bar-Adon

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by

Nadya Yurievna Clayton, B.A.; M.A.

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Dedication

To my family.

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From the Aesthete to the Pedagogue: The Yasnaya Polyana Peasant School as the Experimental Laboratory for Tolstoy's Creative Transformation

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Nadya Yurievna Clayton, Ph.D.

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Supervisor: Tatiana Kuzmic

This dissertation examines Tolstoy's reevaluation of his creative approaches to writing through the medium of his experimental pedagogical work with the peasant children on his estate. It is argued that Tolstoy's pedagogical interlude forms an important bridge to the writer's fiction and should not be viewed as a digression from his development as a writer, but as an integral part of it. This project explores how the educational essays Tolstoy wrote during this period facilitate his transition from championing the aesthetic theory of "pure art" in his formative years as a writer for *The Contemporary* to a more mature author of *War and Peace*, the major masterwork that is imbued with conclusions reached during his pedagogical interlude. Tolstoy's evolution as a writer is examined in the context of his relationship to the aesthetic ideas of the 1850's that became a springboard for Tolstoy's later aesthetic concepts. A

comprehensive textual analysis of Tolstoy's lesser known early works such as *Notes from Lucerne* and "Albert" is undertaken in order to highlight some of their important stylistic peculiarities that provide a valuable insight into the authorial presence and the nature of Tolstoy's aesthetic rhetoric.

Further, it is demonstrated how the school at Yasnaya Polyana becomes the writer's experimental workshop, a testing ground for Tolstoy's pedagogical theories and his creative ideas, which he checks against his students' perception. Finally, the study is concluded by examining Tolstoy's most encompassing work, his epic novel *War and Peace* through the medium of his educational writings and ideas. By locating some of the main concepts of his pedagogical philosophy in the context of this monumental masterwork, we illuminate their meaning more clearly as filtered through the prism of Tolstoy's creative thought in order to demonstrate to what extent Tolstoy's educational ideas informed his creative writings. It is established that all the central principles of Tolstoy's educational thought such as his pedagogy of freedom, his ideas of aesthetic education through reading, art and music, his religious and moral education found their reflections on the pages of *War and Peace* and commend a great deal to a modern educator.

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Chapter I: Introduction

When we speak about early Tolstoy the image that readily comes to mind is that of the widely recognized and highly acclaimed author of *Childhood* and *The Sebastopol Stories* – the two unmistakably Tolstoyan masterpieces that paved the way to recognition for the novice writer on the Russian literary scene. It might come as a surprise to many readers that unlike these masterworks the majority of Tolstoy's early works were considered unsuccessful and were criticized for a particular form of literary bias allied to the aesthetic movement of the 1850s in which Tolstoy became deeply and personally involved at the beginning of his literary career. As a beginning writer Tolstoy found himself drawn into the heated debate over the purpose of art which profoundly influenced the subsequent development of his aesthetic views on literature. However, the proposition to examine Tolstoy's evolution as a writer in his formative years through the prism of his educational activities in the early 1860s might be even a greater revelation to the reader and this is what the present study intends to explore. This dissertation will examine Tolstoy's reevaluation of his creative approaches to writing through the medium of his experimental pedagogical work with the peasant children on his estate. It will be argued that Tolstoy's pedagogical interlude forms an important bridge to the writer's fiction and should not be viewed as a digression from his development as a writer, but as an integral part of it. This project will demonstrate how the educational essays Tolstoy wrote during this period facilitate his transition from championing the aesthetic theory of "pure art" in his formative years as a writer for the *Sovremennik* [*The* Contemporary] to a

more mature author of *War and Peace*, the major masterwork that is imbued with conclusions reached during his pedagogical interlude. The current research intends to focus on the question of Tolstoy's pedagogical work as a form of experimental artistic creativity, but it will also explore the ideas of practical methodology and pedagogy elaborated by Tolstoy in the process of his actual classroom teaching as a practicing educator.

"The general public definitely has no place for fine literature now. But do not think that this would prevent me from loving it now even more than ever. …I have a serious business proposition for you. What would you say if in the present situation, when a filthy political morass is ready to sweep over everything and if not destroy art then defile it, what would you say if the people who believe in the independence and eternal nature of art were to come together and with action and with the word prove this truth and save the eternal and independent from accidental, one-sided and all-engulfing political influence? Could these people be us?" (*PSS* 60: 248) – writes Tolstoy in 1858 to his close literary friend and mentor Vasilii Botkin, proposing to organize a new, strictly aesthetically-oriented literary journal in the name of salvation of "pure art" that came under attack from the rising movement of the intellectual radicals with their materialistic aesthetics. It would be impossible to fully understand Tolstoy's evolution as a writer, especially in his early formative years, without viewing it in the context of his relationship to the aesthetic ideas of the 50s that became a springboard not only for Tolstoy's later aesthetic concepts but also defined the future development of Russian literature. The first chapter provides an exposition of the main aesthetic theories and

literary movements set against the historical background of one of the most turbulent and exciting periods in Russian literature. It traces the formation and development of Tolstoy's aesthetic ideas and his views on literature trough his close association with the core literary circle of *Sovremennik* [*The Contemporary*] – the leading and most progressive literary journal of the time. It looks at the personal and professional connections between the beginning writer and "the invaluable triumvirate" (*PSS* 60: 153), A. V. Druzhinin, V. P. Botkin and P. V. Annenkov, who played the most significant role in the formation of Tolstoy's literary and aesthetic views in the 50s. The chapter offers an in-depth look at the public and "behind the scenes" polemics over the purpose of art that unfolded on the literary stage of the *Sovremennik,* which became a battle ground for the two opposing camps of gentry liberals and revolutionary democrats who were propagating diametrically opposite ideas about the direction of Russian literature and its purpose in the society. The inflammatory pathos of Chernyshevsky's radical materialistic aesthetics who categorically declared that "in the history of literature there had not been created a single significant work exclusively by the idea of the beautiful" (Chernyshevsky, *PSS* 3: 237), is examined side by side with Botkin's views on the problem of artistic creation reflecting the perspective of the pure art theory. In his influential article dedicated to the poetry of A. Fet, Botkin polemicizes with the main premises of the revolutionary democrats, who define the artist as an unmasker of social ills and the conduit for immediately relevant contemporary ideas. He insists that the true poet is free of any didactic and public objectives in his creative work, but "full of unaccountable striving for the expression of his soul's life" (Botkin 202).

Special attention in this part is given to the task of defining Tolstoy's voice in the argument and positioning him in the struggle between the two rival movements. It is rather significant that even at the period of Tolstoy's closest association with the leaders of the Russian aesthetic movement, he does not become a blind follower of the trend but instead is trying to interpret his experience of them and to choose his own literary path, which is located at the crossroads of various literary schools. Tolstoy's views on art were much more nuanced and multifaceted to fit in the narrow constraints of any one literary movement. The idea of the interpretation of art from a moral and ethical perspective originated in Tolstoy's early works from the very beginning, as something distinct from the radicals' or aesthetes' literary agenda. On the one hand, politically charged ideas of revolutionary democrats who believed that the transformation of reality and fighting against social inequalities were the calling of every civic-minded writer and the sole purpose of literature in general, repelled Tolstoy by its one-sidedness and radicalism. On the other hand, the aesthetes calling to find refuge behind the bulwark of eternal art and to create the illusory safe haven where one can live happily and remain blissfully blind to the political upheaval of the surrounding world, could not have satisfied Tolstoy's acute sense of social conscience for long. However, Tolstoy's emergent aesthetic ideas at the time were gravitating to the aesthetic theories of the "triumvirate" as they supported his evolutionary development as a writer and were dictated by his close, personal relationship with its members. Most importantly, the image of the writer as a prophet or sage chosen by God to educate the tastes of the reading public promoted by Druzhinin and especially Botkin in their articles, has always evoked Tolstoy's sympathy and his

early ambitious aspirations. Besides, he had a well-known dislike of overt satire, which projected itself on the rising influence of the so-called "expose movement" in Russian literature and his anti-political sentiment upon his return from his European voyage draws Tolstoy further away from the politically charged aesthetics of revolutionary democrats and brings him closer to the aesthetic position of the liberals, if only temporarily. Thus, it would be fair to say that throughout the 50s Tolstoy struggles to defend an ideal of being responsive to social and political changes in society but at the same time remaining independent as a writer.

The second chapter undertakes a comprehensive textual analysis of Tolstoy's lesser known early works such as "Albert" and *Notes from Lucerne* in order to highlight some of their important stylistic peculiarities that provide a valuable insight into the authorial presence and the nature of Tolstoy's aesthetic rhetoric. Special emphasis has been put in this part on Tolstoy's search for the right genre and a balance that would accommodate both his natural propensity for teaching and philosophizing as well as his extraordinary descriptive artistry. A close analysis also helps to gain a better understanding of the author's constantly changing and evolving position on some of the most timeless and debated aesthetic issues in Russian literature.

Out of the intense intellectual brooding and doubt of the mid 50's there was born a concept of a story that took as its subject matter the fate of an altruistic and talented servant of arts and in its final version received the title "Albert." The conception of "Albert" helped Tolstoy to crystallize his aesthetic views as well as to express his deep personal passion for music. The story was intended to be a treatise on art written in the

language of art, a distinctive manifesto of the pure art theory, where Tolstoy raises the question of the great influence of art, of its "infectiousness" (the definition that he will later develop in his influential tract *What is Art?*) and its absolute power over the human soul. The chapter traces the creative process that surrounded the making of the story and Tolstoy's immense creative struggle with a work that in its final version occupies only about twenty pages, in order to provide the reader with insight into the high level of seriousness with which Tolstoy treated this topic and to determine some of the main reasons for its final unanimous public rejection. A comparative textual analysis of the tale with its third redaction is undertaken to reveal more fully Tolstoy's original intention and its roots, as well as some stylistic peculiarities of the work that lead directly to the question of Tolstoy's aesthetic rhetoric. Special attention in this part is given to the characteristic connection of the tale with Botkin's article on Afanasii Fet's poetry that became a source of creative inspiration for the conception of "Albert." Tolstoy not only admired Botkin's style, calling the essay "a poetic catechism of poetry," but most importantly the ability of the author to provide a theoretical basis for the problems of artistic creation and poetry that, in Tolstoy's own words, "most people intuitively felt but could not express in words" (*PSS* 60: 153). For him this article was a manifesto not so much of the pure art theory but of the universal humanistic ideas that the author was compelled to defend against the attacks of a rising materialistic world outlook. Tolstoy reworked and integrated some of the central postulates that constituted the essence of the article, such as the discussion of the nature of art and its origins as being rooted in the idea of the beautiful, as well as the focus on the hedonistic and pleasure-giving properties

of art. The juxtaposition of the tale with Botkin's essay not only facilitates the understanding of some of the most climactic scenes in the story, but also offers the reader an important glimpse into the process of primary source material adaptation by Tolstoy. It is rather significant, however, that even at the time of Tolstoy's closest association with the leaders of the aesthetic movement, moral questions never lose their importance for his literary work and his characters try to solve the problem of moral self-improvement even on the pages of a story that allegedly preoccupies itself solely with aesthetic problems.

Speaking about Tolstoy's creative experiments of the 1850's, the present study could not disregard another emblematic work from this period, *Notes from Lucerne*, whose conception had interrupted Tolstoy's prolonged work on "Albert" and which, in contrast to it, was written freely and with great enthusiasm. The story grew out of Tolstoy's impressions during his European voyage of 1857 and became a sort of summary of the reflections triggered by the encounters and experiences of the trip. It presents a special interest to us due to the problematic of its genre definition, a closer look at which helps to shed light on Tolstoy's approaches to the search for the right balance to accommodate the tension between the philosophico-argumentative and descriptive aspects of his art. It is noteworthy that Tolstoy hesitated in the choice of genre for *Lucerne* as frequently happened with works where he intended to address the reader directly and express his authorial position overtly. As his diaries attest, Tolstoy at the period of writing *Lucerne* was particularly concerned with the problem of morality in art evoked by the complex and conflicting experiences of his European trip. His original natural propensity towards "moral art" rather than "pure art" engenders his frequent

vacillations between the fictional and journalistic genres, thus already as a beginning writer Tolstoy is trying to solve the problem of the artistic representation of his philosophical thought.

Undoubtedly, *Lucerne* represents a confluence of journalistic and fictional genres very characteristic of Tolstoy's style. It can be regarded as one of the best examples of a kind of passionate and influential literary journalism which combined bold fictional scenes with awe-inspiring Swiss landscapes. Tolstoy's indignation practically overflows the pages; the reader fully experiences the undeniable force of Tolstoyan criticism and a civic temperament that fiercely attacks social injustice, human callousness and egotism. A close stylistic analysis of several representative passages from *Lucerne* included in this chapter allows the reader to gain insight into the rhetorical devices employed by the author for the persuasive expression of his civic indignation. It is demonstrated how these rhetorical devices bear strong characteristics of oratorical speech with its building intensity of inflection, constant broad juxtapositions and antitheses, use of rhetorical questions and emotional repetitions. These play an instrumental role in the development of the authorial voice in the narration and become an important compositional device. The result is a narrative with a complex structure in which every voice has its specific function and the narrator's voice is not necessarily identical with the authorial position or role. It is shown that this rhetorical device serves not only as an effective persuasion mechanism, but also due to its repetitiveness, helps to establish a certain rhythmic flow of narration that is so characteristic of Tolstoy's prose. In *Lucerne* we examine Tolstoy's developing inclination for general philosophical themes as well as

moral and ethical generalizations. Here the author shifts his focus from psychological observations of the individual to the wider questions of the social and historical existence of man. However, despite the fact that the problematics of *Lucerne* is considerably wider than those of its predecessor "Albert," there is still a strong connection between the two works, reflected not only in the fact that the central character in this story is also a musician cast out by society but even more in the close echoing and similar treatment of the art theme itself. This part highlights the continuity of Tolstoy's creative concepts that flow one into another each expanding and building on previous experiences. The reader's attention is drawn to the important fact that it is in *Lucerne* that Tolstoy makes perhaps the first attempt to fuse his nature descriptions with philosophical discourse in the search for the right balance between the two dominant elements of his style. This search will continue throughout his literary career and will culminate in *War and Peace,* where Tolstoy will struggle especially hard in his attempts to reconcile the historical-philosophical and novelistic aspects of his epic novel.

The third chapter focuses its main attention on Tolstoy's pedagogical interlude – a brief but extremely meaningful period in the writer's life dedicated entirely to the practical pedagogical activities and the problems of public education. It explores how the peasant school at Yasnaya Polyana becomes the writer's experimental laboratory, a testing ground not only for Tolstoy's pedagogical theories but also for his creative ideas, which he checks against his students' perception. A close consideration is given to Tolstoy's pedagogical writings, which form an important bridge to his fiction and should not be viewed as a digression from his development as a writer, but an integral part of it.

A comprehensive stylistic analysis of some of the most distinctive passages from Tolstoy's educational essays draws the reader's attention to the language that Tolstoy employs for the expression of their programmatic content which is remarkably artful and free of overt didacticism.

After several unsuccessful literary experiments in the late 50's, Tolstoy is faced with the problem of determining his future creative trajectory. He is searching for a new impulse that will recharge his creative work with new and powerful ideas and will give it a new direction. He wants to oppose something powerful, earthy and tangible to the contemporary and fleeting tendencies of the metropolitan literature. Thus the opening of a school for peasant children at Yasnaya Polyana in the autumn of 1859 became a logical step on the way to Tolstoy's personal and professional transformation. The work connected with the school brought Tolstoy not only the moral satisfaction that he desired so much and could not find in his literary pursuits at the time, but what is more important, gave a new meaningful direction for his literary ideas and eventually stimulated him to return to writing. The school at Yasnaya Polyana became a testing ground not only for Tolstoy's pedagogical theories, but also for his literary ideas. This period is marked for Tolstoy by an intense fermentation of creative thought that results in the publication of numerous stimulating works on the theory and practical methodology of pedagogy as well as his novel *The Cossacks* and the short story "Polikushka" in 1863. Another important creative product that resulted from this period of Tolstoy's passionate preoccupation with the cause of public education is the *Primer* book that was published in 1871. Tolstoy's pedagogical work at Yasnaya Polyana became a direct source and

inspiration for the creation of this outstanding teaching material, which by far surpassed all the existing contemporary educational materials of this type in the diversity of its content, the artfulness of its style and the clarity and simplicity of its language.

The question of public education was at the time a topical problem that had been intensely discussed in the press. So it was not surprising or unexpected in the least that Tolstoy's imagination became captivated by the idea of people's education. However, what was original is his practical and unconventional approach to the problem that combined the ways of a dilettante educator with the methods of a professional writer. Besides it perfectly coincided with Tolstoy's vision of a writer as an educator of masses and his emerging principles of moral art. The chapter also uncovers an interesting connection between Tolstoy and Berthold Auerbach, one of the representatives of the German populist movement, whose novel *New Life* [*Neues Leben*] and the ideas on the people's education expressed in it became a direct source of inspiration for Tolstoy's decision to open a school for peasant children on his estate and for his pedagogical approaches. According to Tolstoy's own confession to an American diplomat, Eugene Schuyler, " it was owing to this [book] that I started a school for my peasants and became interested in popular education." It is demonstrated to what extent the central ideas of Auerbach's novel resonated with Tolstoy's self-perception and his life trajectory at the time and that he regarded the novel not simply as a literary work of certain value to him but as a sort of code of instructions that could help him to find a new practical occupation and cut the Gordian knot of his literary deadlock. Thus Tolstoy, with the help of Auerbach, determined a new, exciting and gratifying pedagogical pursuit that not only

offered him a perfect creative outlet, but also a rather noticeable public platform for the expression of his views on education as much as literature.

Since Tolstoy was a dilettante in the field of education and was not very familiar with the contemporary educational theories or schools, he decided to gain a more intimate knowledge of the subject by embarking on a nine month long European voyage where he surveyed teaching practices of public schools in Germany, France, Switzerland, England and Belgium. Tolstoy spent most of his time visiting public schools and kindergartens, reading books on history of education and meeting with ordinary teachers as well as some of the most prominent European pedagogues of the time. He felt extremely disappointed with the lack of freedom and respect for the needs of the students as well as the prevalence of thoughtless memorization and boring scholastic routines widely applied in most educational institutions. In his programmatic article "On the Education of People" written abroad, that opened the first January issue of *The Yasnaya Polyana Journal*, Tolstoy gives the gist of his outlook on the established educational practices for people in some leading European countries – an in-depth overview of their historical development rather persuasively argued by the author to prove their inadequacy and even harmfulness to the cause of public education. A running undercurrent of thought in the article centers around the idea that there is a general desire for learning among people which, paradoxically, runs counter to what the established order of society considers to be education and thrusts upon unwilling pupils in the public schools. Tolstoy's whole argument for a new and radically different approach to schoolwork proceeds from this dichotomy. In his attempt to elaborate a pedagogy of freedom in opposition to the

traditional pedagogy of compulsion which "regards the human being in the process of education as a creature completely subordinated to the trainer," Tolstoy proposes the example of a mother teaching her child to speak as his ideal image of free, reciprocal and progressive model of education. As Michael Armstrong insightfully observes, "the image of the mother-child relationship with its reciprocity of conversation lies at the core of Tolstoy's educational theory and serves for him as a model of all genuinely educational relationships" (Armstrong 35).

In his opening essay on public education Tolstoy is also especially preoccupied with the all important for him question of literature for the people. He directly links the failure of public education to the nonexistence of accessible literature for the people and of the people, in his own words: "an irrefutable proof that the people are uneducated is the fact that there is no literature of the common people…." (*PSS* 8: 11). The search for a transitional literature, which might mediate between the vernacular tales and songs and the literary classics, preoccupied Tolstoy throughout the period covered by his educational essays and continued to do so long after he had abandoned his school. Drawing on his practical teaching experience and the information that he gathered during his European journey, Tolstoy attempted to create, single-handedly, an entire corpus of transitional literary material for peasant children, composed partly of his own stories, partly of adaptations and translations from other literatures. This anthology of readings, fictional and non-fictional, has never grown obsolete and can be considered perhaps Tolstoy's greatest achievement for education after the sixties.

However, the deeper undercurrents of Tolstoy's interest in pedagogy have been perhaps most undeniably manifested in the series of three articles-reports "The Yasnaya Polyana School in the Months of November and December" that were subsequently published in the January, March and April issues of *The Yasnaya Polyana Journal* in 1862 and eventually became a basis for a later pamphlet "Should We Teach the Peasant Children to Write, or Should They Teach Us?" As a matter of fact, these works are only loosely connected with the questions of pedagogy, their genre can be more precisely termed as a "literary pamphlet," where Tolstoy defines and formulates main principles of his own artistic method and that contain the embryos of the future stories for people and the art tract. They represent a fusion of the artfulness and lyricism of description with the theoretical methodological questions of the pedagogical content. When reading these essays, it becomes quite obvious that Tolstoy's pedagogical interlude turns into a form of artistic creation for the writer, where the boundaries between fiction and reality are blurred and the school children undergo the same kind of analysis through most scrupulous observation as Tolstoy's literary personages. P.V. Annenkov in his perceptive article on Tolstoy's *Cossacks* in 1863 wittingly noted that Tolstoy's pedagogic activity is "nothing less than a new kind of his artistic creation" (*Vospominania* 290). There is, indeed, no precise boundary between Tolstoy's literary and his pedagogical activities. Tolstoy does not teach so much as he experiments, trying to prove to himself and others the existence of aesthetic needs in the system of values of even a simple peasant child, thus hoping to regain faith in his literary occupation. For him to teach children and lead them to the discovery of life is to share with them an experience which has a profound

aesthetic dimension. As some critics, and among them Boris Eikhenbaum, have recognized, the walk through the woods in the Yasnaya Polyana school essay is a scene unsurpassed even in Tolstoy's fiction. We may doubt whether Fedka was a greater writer than Shakespeare or Goethe, but we should not doubt that Tolstoy learned from Fedka as much as he taught him. Fedka's real literary glory is that he gave Tolstoy a revelation of a new fictional ideal – stories which were to combine moral insight with objective narration and an austere, lucid, classical manner. Tolstoy's stimulating literary pamphlets are still extremely topical nowadays and offer to modern educators a great deal of psychological insight as well as practical teaching tools for a wide spectrum of subjects ranging from composition and language to music, geography and mathematics. The continuing vitality of these essays lies in the clarity of their concern for what are still the fundamental problems of popular education, and in the boldness of their attempted solutions.

The fourth and final chapter of the dissertation explores Tolstoy's most encompassing work, his epic novel *War and Peace*, through the medium of his educational writings and ideas. By locating some of the main concepts of Tolstoy's pedagogical philosophy in the context of this monumental masterwork and illuminating their meaning more clearly as filtered through the prism of Tolstoy's creative thought, it is demonstrated to what extent his educational ideas informed his creative writings. It is shown how Tolstoy's pedagogical writings and his practical educational activities not only greatly inspired the creation of this epic masterpiece but have become a source of creative conceptualization for the novel. The chapter highlights how all the central

principles of Tolstoy's educational thought such as his pedagogy of freedom, his ideas of aesthetic education through reading, art and music, his religious and moral education found their reflections on the pages of *War and Peace*. It also establishes that Tolstoy's original, humane and practical vision of education has anticipated some of the most leading principles of our contemporary educational theory and commends a great deal to a modern educator.

Taking into consideration the obvious lack of research concerning Tolstoy's educational thought and his considerable contribution to the field of practical and theoretical pedagogy, as well as a general tendency to view his pedagogical writings outside the context of his creative work, this part focuses its main attention on the task of identifying thematic links between Tolstoy's educational writings and his epic novel. Tolstoy himself conceived the role of the artist as having a distinct educational purpose. The chapter traces the connections between his principles of a liberating pedagogy and the fostering of the spirit of freedom as described in his Yasnaya Polyana school essays and the problems of freedom and necessity in the novel as the central problem of Tolstoy's philosophy of history. It also uncovers the connections between Tolstoy's pedagogy of freedom and his philosophy of altruistic, communal and liberal family upbringing and education so vividly exemplified through his portrayal of the Rostov family, which is juxtaposed with the high-minded however rigid, exclusive and elitist aristocratic educational trend represented by the Bolkonskys.

One of the most obvious connections between Tolstoy's educational writings and his epic novel is the fact documented by the writer himself in his essay "Yasnaya Polyana

School in November and December" where he describes his unsuccessful attempts at giving history lessons to his peasant students, in the process of which he inadvertently conceptualizes the historical plot of *War and Peace.* We can clearly trace the birth of the ironic anti-historical approach that later materialized in the novel in Tolstoy's pedagogical essay dealing with the description of a history lesson which "incidentally" has its subject-matter the year of 1812.

One of the dominant ideas of Tolstoy's educational philosophy is the promotion of learning in a spirit of individual freedom. In his teaching experiments at the Yasnaya Polyana school he constantly strove to successfully match the directional role of the teacher with the individual freedom of the learner. He saw compulsion as the root of the failure of public schools. "In education equality and freedom is the main thing," (*PSS* 48: 27) Tolstoy wrote in his diary in 1860 as if pointing to the leitmotif that was to dominate all his pedagogical writings and activities. Similarly, he believed that a trusting and authentic relationship between teacher and pupil was the essential factor in the whole process of education as well as the foundation principle of successful teaching and learning. In *War and Peace* we find a vivid artistic depiction of what Tolstoy condemned in his pedagogical articles as an authoritarian, compulsive and regimented style of teaching inhibiting the growth of the students' creative potential and suppressing their individual freedom. Very similar to the little Tolstoy who experienced fear, humiliation and, as a result, loathing for learning under the oppressive guidance of his tutor St. Jerome, Princess Mary experiences a fear-induced stupor during her lessons of geometry conducted by her father, which leads to complete paralysis of all her learning faculties.

Tolstoy takes the image of maternal love as his favorable analogy for the relationship between the teacher and the learner. With this image he conveys the integrity and the essential natural simplicity of the teacher-learner relationship. In his conception of teaching seen as a conversational dialogue, Tolstoy perceives this relationship as a progress towards equality, a transcending of the inequality deriving from the varying degrees of knowledge and experience existing between its participants. One of the most wonderful examples of such dialogic, parental approaches to teaching is the relationship of Natasha Rostova with her mother in *War and Peace,* which is informal, however permeated with the feeling of mutual respect and trust. It is rather indicative that throughout the novel Natasha remains one of the most expressive, dialogic characters who is brimming with questions and engages everybody who comes in contact with her into a conversational exchange. She serves as a wonderful example of Tolstoy's ideal learner type and of a learning process based on a close interpersonal relationship of a learner with a teacher, where both parties are being engaged in continuous and mutually enriching conversation.

The problems of freedom and necessity as the central problem of Tolstoy's philosophy and history receive an in-depth elaboration in the novel. Similarly, the tension between these two philosophical antipodes also to a great extent informs all of Tolstoy's pedagogical articles. The principles of a liberating pedagogy devised by Tolstoy find their articulation in discussions about discipline and the freedom of choice and self-expression for students on the pages of his Yasnaya Polyana school essays. Tolstoy was committed to the view that fruitful and productive learning could be

promoted only through caring, encouraging and non-compulsive classroom relationships. He saw the balance of freedom and order as being crucial to the entire process of learning; in his school he adopted the highly formative and complex form of the pedagogy that helped him to meet the challenge of maintaining this fragile equilibrium. The tension between personal freedom and necessity is also a prominent theme in *War and Peace*, where the dialectic of necessity and freedom is explored against the background of major political and social occurrences. Here, among other philosophical themes, Tolstoy examines the concept of unrestricted freedom and its destructive influences in connection with the episode of Natasha's infatuation with Anatole Kuragin. The theme of human freedom also receives an extensive treatment in the Second Epilogue, where Tolstoy asks: "what is the man's responsibility to society, the conception of which results from the conception of freedom? What is conscience and the perception of right and wrong in actions that follows from the consciousness of freedom?" He calls upon the reader "to renounce a freedom that does not exist, and to recognize a dependence of which we are not conscious" (*PSS* 12: 394). This understanding of the problems of freedom and responsibility and their perpetual dichotomy echoes closely Tolstoy's approaches to the issues of freedom and order in his teaching practices. In his school he advocated freedom not as the end in itself or a means for self-assertion, but as a necessary condition for nurturing the spirit of freely oriented discovery and as a natural outcome of the loving and reciprocal communication between the teacher and the student.

Tolstoy believed that individual freedom was best fostered through the development of the religious and moral potential of each student and the nurturing of the

spirit of responsibility and altruism which he considered to be the essence of the ethico-religious education. In the novel these ideas find their realization in the portrayal and constant juxtaposition of several family types: the Rostovs with their "life by the heart" spontaneity, compassion and unselfish regard for the welfare of others, and the Kuragins and the Bergs with their "life by the mind," – calculating, egotistical, self-serving and indifferent to the scope of human suffering. Tolstoy conceived of the whole educational process as a practical realization of the spirit of altruism and practice of active love. His entire philosophy of education was permeated by the ethico-religious spirit and he continuously sought to realize his religious and moral ideals through every activity of the schooling process. According to Tolstoy, perhaps the most important task of the teacher in connection with the process of moral and ethico-religious education, as becomes evident from his Yasnaya Polyana school reports, was the awakening in his students of love for the Scriptures, and the development of their ability to comprehend the meaning of the revealed word, and to determine its relevance in the conditions of their daily lives.

Tolstoy recognized the importance of an aesthetic harmony as the foundation of all moral, religious, cultural and intellectual development and proclaimed the right of all children to have access to the richness of their cultural, and specifically their aesthetic heritage. His belief in the need for all children to have a good education in the arts was rooted in the deeper conviction that all understanding is aesthetic in origin, and that the nurturing of learning potential depends ultimately on the enrichment of the imaginative resources of the learner. Tolstoy never allowed the instruction in the basic skills, be it reading, writing or music, to override the main objective of learning as he understood it –

that is to be enjoyable and cheerful. He argued that "if music teaching is to leave some trace and be willingly accepted it is essential to teach art from the very beginning and not skill in singing or playing" (*PSS* 8: 125). The same attitude of the author towards music is discernable in *War and Peace,* where Tolstoy repeatedly emphasizes Natasha's imperfect singing skills which, however, does not prevent her from producing the most stunning, almost mesmerizing effect upon her listeners, often moving them to tears. Tolstoy fully recognized the importance of an aesthetic harmony as the foundation of all learning, and sought to develop creative potential in his pupils, utilizing the resources of literary, visual and musical art-forms to achieve this objective.

Chapter II: The Literary Atmosphere of the 1850s

THE CONTEMPORARY CIRCLE

When we speak about early Tolstoy the image that probably comes to mind is that of the widely recognized and highly acclaimed author of *Childhood* and *The Sebastopol Stories* - the two unmistakably Tolstoyan masterpieces that paved the way to recognition for the novice writer on the Russian literary scene. It might come as a surprise to many readers that unlike these masterpieces the majority of Tolstoy's early works were considered unsuccessful, were criticized for a particular form of literary bias and accused of a certain elitism. They were enthusiastically received neither by the reading public nor by most leading literary critics of the time. The tendency which aroused such skepticism was allied to the aesthetic movement of the 1850s in which Tolstoy became deeply and personally involved at the beginning of his literary career and which profoundly influenced the subsequent development of his aesthetic views on literature. As a beginning writer Tolstoy found himself drawn into the heated debate over the purpose of art which sharply divided the Russian literary scene of the time and was born out of the clash of two opposing literary movements. It would be impossible to fully understand Tolstoy's evolution as a writer, especially in his formative years, without viewing it in the context of his relationship to the aesthetic ideas of the 1850s; they became a springboard not only for Tolstoy's later aesthetic concepts but also defined much in the future development of Russian literature.

Tolstoy arrived in St. Petersburg in November of 1855 and immediately found himself drawn into the circle of writers gathered around *The Contemporary*

[*Sovremennik*]--one of the best literary journals of the time. It was founded by Alexander Pushkin in 1836 with the intention to establish and maintain a tradition of objective, serious literary criticism at the international European level. After Pushkin's death in 1837, *The Contemporary* struggled to survive for almost ten years in the midst of the fast-changing literary and socio-political scene of Russia. The end of the year 1846 brought an important change in the make-up of the journal as the previous editor Petr Pletniev handed its leadership over to a group of literary men who were closely bound not only by personal sympathies but also by a common attitude of mind and shared ideological interests: two professional journalists Nikolai Nekrasov and Ivan Panaev became the chief editors of *The Contemporary*, working closely with Vissarion Belinskii who was the leader of the critical section of the journal. Shortly after his arrival in Petersburg, Tolstoy also made the acquaintance of A.V. Druzhinin, I.I. Panaev, V.P. Botkin and P.V. Annenkov--all of them close friends and core contributors to the journal who shaped its literary direction.

Tolstoy had previously been in correspondence with Nekrasov and knew the latter's high opinion of his talent. But of all the writers and critics involved with *Sovremennik*, Druzhinin, Botkin and Annenkov played the most significant role in the formation of Tolstoy's literary and aesthetic views in the 50s. During the year 1856, Tolstoy stays in constant contact with what he himself calls the "invaluable triumvirate" (*PSS* 60: 153). In his correspondence from these years we find numerous allusions to Tolstoy's growing attachment and even strong dependence on the opinions of his new acquired friends and mentors. He sends Druzhinin the

manuscript of his new novel *Youth* [*Junost'*] and informs him that the future literary life of his creation hinges on Druzhinin's critical opinion of it (*PSS* 60: 86). It is worth mentioning that the sense of connection was mutual, and both Druzhinin and Botkin did their best to encourage Tolstoy as a fledgling writer. Druzhnin wrote to Turgenev about Tolstoy in 1856: "The more I get to know him and his talent, the more I grow fond of him. Here's the real youthful and strong personality; Russian, bright and equally attractive in his whims and childishness" (*Turgenev i krug"Sovremennika"* 193).

The literary and aesthetic views of this group of gentry liberals were formed by the social conditions of the environment in which they grew up and were educated. The circle of "old members" of *The Contemporary* in its early days was rather homogeneous--all of them belonged to the same public, social and literary spheres, and shared similar tastes and interests. All of them, except perhaps Botkin, who was the son of a prominent tea merchant, were of noble birth and were raised and educated following the values of European civilization. These people were a product of the intellectual ferment of the 1840s and not long after its inception were publishing by their unified effort the best, most serious and progressive literary journal of the time. In opposition to them, however, there started to arise a new wing in *The Contemporary* with the appearance of Chernyshevsky (1854-1862) and later on Dobroliubov (1857-1861). The views of these young intellectual radicals known as *raznochintsy* were in stark contrast with those of the older liberal members of *Sovremennik*. These young Turks came on the scene at the crucial moment of political reform when Russian society was agitated and divided in

anticipation of the imminent liberation of the serfs. So it would be fair to say that their political and literary ideas were born of this pre-reform atmosphere as well as being the product of their non-noble milieu. They came to the journal as people who were absolute outsiders to the old circle of *The Contemporary,* independent and bound neither by its traditions nor by the personal relationships that entangled the older members. Despite a very minor age difference between them and some of the previous members of the journal (Druzhinin was only four years older than Chernyshevsky), by spirit and mind-set they belonged to another generation of so-called "new people." But most importantly, they were people of another social environment absolutely alien to the noble members of *The Contemporary*. Having detached themselves from any given social class and chosen an independent path different from the one that was predetermined by birth, they were people without tradition, without ties to a particular public, without connections to the past and to the gentry culture in which the noble members of the journal were deeply steeped. We might say that they were free-thinking and independent people in the true sense of the word.

CHERNYSHEVSKY'S MATERIALISTIC AESTHETICS

The differences between these two groups within *Sovremennik* were especially vividly revealed in the polemics on what were known then as the Pushkin and Gogol schools in Russian literature. These debates laid a deep divide between the two camps, which, however, had originated earlier with the appearance of Chernyshevsky's dissertation *The Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality* (1855). It emphasized the social

importance of art and its powerful transformative role in society, thus asserting new principles for the development of art in Russia. The aesthetic theory of Chernyshevsky as expounded in his dissertation marked a fundamental change in the history of Russian aesthetics--a break with its idealistic tradition. Chernyshevsky put into question Hegel's concept of art as the realization of the ideal in aesthetics and counterpoised to it his materialistic formula of the beautiful: "the beautiful is life," "the beautiful is a phenomenon in which we see life the way it should be according to our understanding; the beautiful is that which displays life in itself or reminds us about life..." (Chernyshevsky, *PSS* 2: 10). The superiority of one object over another of the same kind serves here as the objective criterion of the beautiful (with the important qualification that not all kinds are beautiful). Chernyshevsky emphasizes the social relativity of aesthetic tastes, different among peasants compared to the noble milieu, denying many manifestations of taste any viable substance such as, for example, romantic "preoccupation with pale, unhealthy beauty." Thus, Feuerbach's anthropological premise about needs common to all mankind is complicated in Chernyshevsky by the inclusion of the social basis of the aesthetic ideal. Believing that humanity's striving for the beautiful is fully satisfied by reality, Chernyshevsky revisits the question of the content of art, expanding its boundaries again to the "common interest in life" and its purpose. Art's leading goal--the reproduction of life--according to Chernyshevsky was first laid down in the aesthetics of antiquity by Plato and Aristotle, who considered that the essence of art consisted in the imitation of life, *mimesis*. However, though the reproduction of life requires active participation from the

artist, his "ability to distinguish the essential features from the less important ones," it constitutes only the formal prerequisite of art. Chernyshevsky believed that art has two other goals: the explanation of life and the judgment of its phenomena. All these goals can be especially fully realized in literature, whose medium "provides a perfect opportunity for the expression of thought, thus an artist becomes a thinker and the work of art still residing in the artistic realm also acquires a scientific significance" (Chernyshevsky, *PSS* 2: 86). Chernyshevsky's definition of art as "the textbook of life" far outlived many other premises of his materialistic teaching and later became a stock phrase for socialist realist critics.

However, Chernyshevsky's manifesto of materialistic aesthetics was not free from contradictions. While he argued for the foundation of the beautiful and typical as rooted in real life, calling on artists to adopt an active and progressive outlook on reality, he did not manage to establish a strong link between the subjective content of art (the explanation of life and the judgment of its phenomena) and its creative side including the form creative process, and he limited the role of the artistic imagination. Thus one of his assertions that "life does not care to explain its phenomena to us while scientific and artistic works do" remained unpersuasive, as he failed to trace the specifics of this process of explanation of life "in the language of art."

The underestimation of the artist's creativity and selectivity on Chernyshevsky's part was especially glaring considering the previous Hegelian postulate about the ideal in art and might perhaps be considered a polemical cost of the excessive "apologia of reality as opposed to the imaginary" (Chernyshevsky, *PSS* 2: 89). His denial of the natural

phenomenon of the tragic and its reduction to "the horrible in human life" was also rather open to criticism (2: 30).

Chernyshevsky's dissertation fueled heated debates about the purpose of art and it was not accepted by many leading writers and literary critics of the time such as Turgenev, Tolstoy, Annenkov, Druzhinin, Grigoriev and others who reproached the author for belittling the role of art. So it would be fair to say that aesthetics was the field where disagreements between the literary liberals and the democrats became evident earlier than anywhere else. Nikolai Shelgunov (a publicist, literary critic and a close friend and partisan of many democrats including Dobroliubov, Pisarev, Herzen, and Ogarev) who was present at the defense of Chernyshevsky's dissertation, later observed that "the intellectual movement of the 60s in its rudimentary stage was declared for the first time in 1855 at the public dispute in St. Petersburg University" (Shelgunov and Mikhailov, *Vospominaniia* 1: 164).

THE CLASH OF THE LITERARY MOVEMENTS: THE BATTLE OVER THE CONTEMPORARY

Thus, *Sovremennik* became a battle ground for the two opposing camps of gentry liberals and revolutionary democrats who were propagating diametrically opposite ideas about the direction of Russian literature and its purpose in the society. The liberals professed the idea of art for art's sake where art was given the function of a temple in which beautiful, admirable and worthy sides of life were worshiped and celebrated without much concern for the present political and social unrest; the temple was not supposed to be profaned by the trifles and impurities of

everyday existence. The revolutionary democrats, on the other hand, were mostly concerned with the relationship of art to life and its connections with the lives of ordinary people; in their view, literature was one of the most effective tools which could be used for political and social transformation.

Needless to say such opposing ideas could not stay within the limits of pure literary discussion. Both groups were trying hard to gain more ground by taking control of the editorship of *Sovremennik* and by attracting the most prominent and promising writers of the time to their side. Botkin was pressuring Nekrasov to replace Chernyshevsky with Apollon Grigoriev on the editorial board of *Sovremennik*, as can be seen from this excerpt of his letter written in [date]: "Today Apollon Grigoriev came to see me--he is willing to participate in *Sovremennik* provided that Chernyshevesky will not... Under your supervision, Grigoriev would be a real treasure for the journal...Besides, he is closer to us in all respects than Chernyshevsky" (*Golos minuvshego*, 92-93). At the same time Druzhinin was appealing to Turgenev asking the latter to choose sides and assume a firm position in regard to Chernyshevsky; he insisted that Turgenev, Botkin and Tolstoy should become the leaders and take over the editorship of the journal. However, after Nekrasov handed over the editorship of the critical department of *Sovremennik* to Chernyshevsky, Druzhinin left the journal and in the fall of 1855 became an editor of *The Library for Reading [Biblioteka dlia chteniia]* hoping to form a strong opposition to *Sovremennik* around this journal.

As a young writer Tolstoy found himself drawn into this battle of two generations that was destined to determine the future path of *belles-lettres* in Russia, and, naturally,

he felt an urgent need to position himself in the argument and it seemed he had to do so by choosing sides. At that time Tolstoy was a beginning but promising writer who already made a name for himself after the publication of *Sebastopol Stories.* Both camps were looking for talented writers who would reinforce their position and Tolstoy was a desirable ally for either one. As has been mentioned earlier, upon his arrival in St. Petersburg, Tolstoy almost immediately became involved in the literary circle of *Sovremennik* and formed close connections with its liberal members such as Druzhinin, Botkin and Annenkov. This was a natural choice for Tolstoy, as they were not only members of the same gentry class, but they also shared similar views on the purpose of art and its function in the society. Tolstoy's emergent aesthetic ideas at the time were gravitating to the aesthetic theories of the "triumvirate." We see that as early as his novel *Youth* [*Junost'*] Tolstoy lays down the early principles of his future aesthetic teaching which will continue to evolve throughout his life. There Tolstoy and his protagonist Nikolai solve the problem of their relationship to reality in terms of self-improvement and the cultivation of good feelings. It is quite obvious that Tolstoy's respect and veneration for the valuable and fragile inner world of the person takes precedence over any ideology or political agenda of the time. Without a doubt, this message of all-embracing universal love stood in sharp contrast to the ideas of Chernyshevsky and other revolutionary democrats who believed that the transformation of reality and fighting against social inequalities were the calling of every civic-minded writer and the purpose of literature in general. The clash between the two doctrines was inevitable and Tolstoy passionately, as always, threw himself into the defense of the

principles of pure art that he shared with his literary friends. If we look for an explanation of Tolstoy's support for the ideas of pure art, it can be found in the fact that they supported his evolutionary development as a writer at the time, as well as that being dictated by his close, personal relationship with Druzhinin, Botkin and Annenkov. In July of 1856 Tolstoy writes a pointed letter to Nekrasov in which he expresses his deep disapproval of Chernyshevsky's critical work in *Sovremennik* and does not conceal his disappointment with the fact that Druzhinin was allowed to leave the journal:

> No, you have made a big mistake by letting Druzhinin slip out of your confederacy. Only with him could you have counted on good criticism in *Sovremennik*, and now it is nothing short of a disgrace, with this gentleman reeking of bedbugs [i.e. Chernyshevsky]. An opinion has formed not only in our criticism, but also in literature and in our society in general that it is very fine to be indignant, peevish, angry and spiteful. But I find it very bad. They love Gogol more than Pushkin. Belinsky's criticism is the pinnacle of perfection, your poems are best-loved of all other contemporary poets. But I find it bad because a peevish, angry person is in an abnormal state. (*PSS* 60: 74).

In the tone of this letter we can sense Tolstoy's deep frustration with Nekrasov's decision to make Chernyshevsky the head of the critical department of *Sovremennik*, a move which not only shifted the balance of power towards Chernyshevsky and his supporters but also gave the latter a perfect opportunity to use the journal as a tribune for his ideas of radical change of reality which were in conflict with Tolstoy's peaceful evolutionary ideas.

CHERNYSHEVSKY'S COUNTER-ATTACK – "ESSAYS ON THE GOGOL PERIOD IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE"

In the midst of this struggle between the two rival tendencies, Chernyshevsky published in *Sovremennik* a cycle of nine articles under the title "Essays on the Gogol

period in Russian literature" (1855-1856). In this series of essays Chernyshevsky characterized the work of some leading critics and journalists of the 30s and 40s such as N. A. Polevoi, O. I. Senkovskii, S. P. Shevyrev, N. I. Nadezhdin and V.G. Belinskii through their attitude to what was called the Gogol school, in his opinion "the only strong and fruitful movement" in Russian literature. In them he also defined some general prerequisites that conditioned the effectiveness of criticism; to name a few: a literary critic should possess a system of convictions and take care to disseminate his ideas among the reading public, he must not only possess aesthetic taste but also the ability to speak of the most burning contemporary problems. Chernyshevsky strove not only to give a condensed history of Russian critical thought of the 30s and 40s, but also to remind the reader of Vissarion Belinsky's teaching and its role in the development of the Russian literary tradition and most importantly, to demonstrate that the revolutionary democrats were the true successors of his progressive ideas.

Chernyshevsky considered Belinsky the first Russian literary historian who fully appreciated the historical importance of many Russian writers of the pre-Pushkin period such as Lomonosov, Derzhavin, Karamzin and others, paying tribute to them and thus putting an end to the denial of a Russian literary heritage that had been prevalent among the proponents of classicism and romanticism. Chernyshevsky took upon himself the considerable task of clarifying the nature of Belinsky's aesthetic doctrine and his outlook on literature and its role in society. He painstakingly and methodically dissected Belinsky's critical works in order to show his evolution from a student and admirer of Hegel to a revolutionary materialist. In his detailed analysis of the evolution of

Belinsky's philosophical and aesthetic views, Chernyshevsky focused on the materialistic ideas of Belinsky's late period of the 40s when he managed to overcome Hegelian "quietism" and his criticism, in Chernyshevsky's opinion, became most valuable as it "was saturated more and more with the living interests of real life, the most important of which were humanity and the concern for the improvement of human life."

Chernyshevsky made a special effort to purge Belinsky of his Hegelian roots and the ideas of transcendent philosophy. In Chernyshevsky's opinion, the fault of Hegel's system lay in the fact that his whole aesthetic teaching was based on the premise that the sole purpose of art is to convey the idea of the beautiful. Needless to say, this idealistic view of the independence of art from every human aspiration except the striving for the beautiful did not harmonize with Chernyshevsky's down-to-earth materialistic framework and caused him a great deal of frustration. Thus, he set out to critique the inconsistencies in Hegel's philosophical system in order to bridge the gap between life and literature as an art form, as well as to bring Belinsky's ideas into conformity with his own doctrine. He argued that it was erroneous "to raise the idea of the beautiful into absolute truth, as this idea does not exist independently from a real living person, and the idea of the beautiful is only an abstract notion about one of his aspirations." And since all the strivings of a living person are inseparably connected and intertwined, it should be considered one-sided and untrue to reality to base the whole theory of art solely on the idea of the beautiful. Chernyshevsky insisted that art is created not by an abstract aspiration for the beautiful but by the combined activity of the totality of human faculties and powers. And with a sense of practicality meant to disarm the most ardent opponent,

Chernyshevsky states that "in a human life the need for the truth, love and improvement of living conditions is much more powerful than the striving for the beautiful, thus art, to an extent, always serves as an expression of this need and almost always its works are created by the influence of these prevailing needs, that is the aspiration for the beautiful should be subordinate to these powerful demands of human existence" (Chernyshevsky, *PSS* 3: 237).

This work supplied fresh fuel for the polemics, the more so as Chernyshevsky clearly expressed in it his disagreement with the theory of pure art and categorically declared that "in the history of literature there had not been created a single significant work exclusively by the idea of the beautiful" calling abstract aspirations for the beautiful "impotent and vain" if they are not grounded in the concerns of everyday life (3: 237).

The inflammatory pathos of Chernyshevsky's essays produced a wave of indignation close to fury among the supporters of the pure art theory who had considered Belinsky not only their personal friend but also a literary ally. Botkin and Annenkov fiercely objected to Chernyshevsky's attempt to appropriate Belinsky's legacy and to present him as the father of the revolutionary democrats. Druzhinin, the most devoted champion of pure art, interpreted the problem of the relation of art to life in a diametrically opposite light from Chernyshevsky. Like Tolstoy, he believed that the role of art was to exalt life in its finest manifestations, not to condemn its vices. As a response to Chernyshevsky's attack on the values of the devotees of pure art, Druzhinin published in his journal *The Library for Reading [Biblioteka dlia chteniia]* an extensive article under

the title "The Critique of the Gogol Period in Russian Literature and Our Attitude to It" (1856, Issues 11, 12), where he talks about the importance of an "artistic" understanding of literary tasks and counterposes the Pushkin school to the Gogol movement. Druzhinin's articles put forth an appeal for reconciliation with reality and exaltation in life's goodness--he strongly objected to Chernyshevsky's idea that literature should become one of the main weapons in the social struggle, one that would help to expose the most crying ills of society. On the contrary, Druzhinin was very concerned that the pure temple of art not be besmirched with the dirt of socio-political upheaval.

Chernyshevsky's essays were met by general rejection among the supporters of the pure art theory: Tolstoy, Botkin and Druzhinin had an openly hostile attitude to the work, Tolstoy even scornfully calling the articles "rotten eggs" (*Tolstoi i Turgenev, perepiska* 28). It should be mentioned, nevertheless, that some other members of the literary elite such as Turgenev took a ambivalent position to the problem, as can be seen from his correspondence of the time. For example, he wrote to Panaev and Botkin that although Chernyshevsky treats some living people with too much familiarity, due to which some may get cold feet, the article is "beautiful" and he was sincerely touched by many pages of it. He also writes to Tolstoy about the same time: "Now about Chernyshevsky's articles. I do not like their liberal brash, unmannerly and dry tone, evidence of a callous soul, but I rejoice in their appearance, rejoice in the memory of Belinsky, I rejoice in the fact that his name is finally being uttered with due respect" (*Perepiska s russkimi pisateliami* 1: 146).

TOLSTOY AND THE AESTHETES

In response to what he saw as Chernyshevsky's radical attack on the sanctity of high art, Tolstoy proposed to organize a new literary journal that would stand above all partisan literary movements and would be solely dedicated to the idea of quality literary art. Tolstoy had been mulling over the idea of such a journal for quite some time, especially after Druzhinin's departure from *The Contemporary* [*Sovremennik*] and he planned to invite some of the old core such as Annenkov, Botkin, Druzhinin as well as newer voices like Maikov, Turgenev and Fet to participate in the publication of the journal. This project on Tolstoy's part was very indicative of the situation in Russian society of that time, and his rising concern for the fate of *belles-lettres* in Russia that was shared by many of his literary colleagues. So in January of 1858 Tolstoy writes to Botkin the following:

> The general public definitely has no place for fine literature now. But do not think that this would prevent me from loving it [fine literature] now even more than ever. ...1 have a serious business proposition for you. What would you say if in the present situation, when a filthy political morass is ready to sweep over everything and if not destroy art then defile it, what would you say if the people who believe in the independence and eternal nature of art were to come together and with action and with the word prove this truth and save the eternal and independent from accidental, one-sided and all-engulfing political influence? Could these people be us? I.e. Turgenev, you, Fet, I and all who share and will continue to share our convictions. The means to it is, of course, a journal, an anthology or anything you want to call it. Everything purely artistic that is appearing or will appear should be drawn into this journal. Everything artistic that comes out, both Russian and foreign, should be discussed. The purpose of the journal is one thing: aesthetic enjoyment--to weep and to laugh. The journal does not prove anything, does not pretend to know anything. It has one criterion–educated taste. This journal does not want to know either movement and thus apparently wants even less to do with the needs of the reading public. The journal does not want commercial success. It does not bend to accommodate the demands of the reading public, but boldly becomes its educator in the sense of taste and taste only. (*PSS* 60: 248)

Certainly, such a purist enterprise did not find many followers even among most ardent defenders of the pure art theory. Turgenev met the idea of creation of a strictly aesthetic journal with great reservations as he during that time entertained the idea of a journal entirely dedicated to the problems of emancipation. Botkin did not believe in the success of such a journal and declined Tolstoy's proposal. Druzhinin, on the other hand, responded to Tolstoy's suggestion by informing him that Annenkov, Maikov and others agreed to take part in the new journal but most of them were leaning towards taking over *The Library for Reading* [*Biblioteka dlia chteniia*], which was unacceptable for Tolstoy as he insisted that the new journal should not be associated with any previous affiliation and should be free of any preconceived opinions. Eventually, the initiative of the new aesthetically-oriented journal never materialized and was abandoned by Tolstoy, but it clearly indicated his closeness to the philosophical and aesthetical teachings of the triumvirate.

In fact, Tolstoy's own ideas were somewhat nuanced. It was not that he believed only in "art for art's sake." The idea of the interpretation of art from a moral and ethical perspective already originated in Tolstoy's early works, as something distinct from the radicals' literary agenda. But he had a well-known dislike of overt satire ("satire is not in my taste," he wrote in his diary) and of the works of Saltykov-Shchedrin, one of the rising representatives of the so-called "expose movement" in Russian literature. All this was conducive to the converging of Tolstoy's early creative views with the aesthetic position of his literary friends. Besides, the image of the writer as a prophet or sage chosen by God to educate the tastes of the reading public promoted by Druzhinin and

especially Botkin in their articles, has always evoked Tolstoy's sympathy and his early ambitious aspirations.

BOTKIN'S "CATECHISM OF POETRY"

Tolstoy finds particular support for his thoughts in Botkin's article dedicated to the poetry of A. Fet, published in *The Contemporary* in 1857, where Botkin focuses his attention on the problem of artistic creation and discusses the act of poetic creation from the perspective of the pure art theory. In accordance with it, he represents the process of creation as an "involuntary act," as a "spontaneous outpouring of the soul," as an "unconscious revelation" that has only one goal--to express in any given art form the creator's "feeling, outlook, thought not for any didactic or public purpose but solely for the sake of expressing these feelings and thoughts that overfill the artist's soul" (Botkin 202). He states that the true poet is free of any didactic and public objectives in his creative work, but "full of unaccountable striving for the expression of his soul's life" (202). Botkin polemicizes with the main premises of the movement that defines the artist as an unmasker of social ills and the conduit for immediately relevant contemporary ideas. He expresses his belief that the effect of a poetic creation stands in inverse mathematical proportion to its connection with transient, everyday interests: the less the connection, the deeper and more lasting is the effect of the art. Botkin states that a true poet should be able to reveal an "eternal essence of the human soul under the shell of the temporary." In his article Botkin also discusses popular philosophical thought from the early nineteenth century about the unconscious nature of the creative process

according to which the poet was portrayed as an "instrument of a mysterious, higher power" and expressed in a certain form "its inspirations," and the life of such a "chosen one" was predetermined from above. Even though Botkin considers these ideas to have been taken to extreme and sometimes ridiculous exaggerations by the romantic school, he does not completely discard the unconscious element in the process of creation. Instead, he chooses to side with the German philosopher Schelling who believed that in art there is a combination of conscious creation with some unconscious power and only the full merging and interaction of the two can produce greatness in art. On the whole, Botkin's article was filled with such terms as the "involuntary nature" of the creative process, "poetic spirit," "the life of the soul," "lyricism of feeling"; it emphasized the sensual, hedonistic nature of art comparing poetic experience to the "ecstasy of the soul that resounds throughout our body in the form of the most intimate satisfaction." Needless to say, such formulations did not hold any substance for the earthbound materialistic mind of the revolutionary democrats. Furthermore, Botkin clearly asserted the indisputable value of human individuality, the right of a person to be himself and think and feel independently from the passing demands of reality. He also questioned the ability of human reason to fully penetrate the mysterious nature of great artistic creations, stating that the true motive force behind them is always "unconscious." It is easy to see that all these notions were in fundamental disagreement with the ideas of Chernyshevsky and his followers. Generally speaking, the pure art theory and the idea of the beautiful that lay at its core were regarded by Chernyshevsky and his followers as a mere manifestation of Epicureanism in literature, an attitude that belonged to a few chosen

ones and deserved condemnation for its self-absorption, idleness and alienation from the interests of real life. In his final, ninth article of the cycle on the Gogol period Chernyshevsky took an especially biting tone in the discussion of the "pure art" theory and left no doubt in the reader's mind about the true nature of the movement and its supporters. In this part of the essay the socio-political overtones that penetrate the whole work and lie in the core of the struggle over the purpose of art between the gentry liberals and revolutionary democrats come through especially clearly. Chernyshevsky throws down the gauntlet and launches a fierce attack on the advocates of the philosophy of Epicureanism--those who "know only personal pleasure and grievances unrelated to historical problems and for whom social interests do not exist" (Chernyshevsky, *PSS* 3: 300). He continues to say that "for such refined epicureans, life is limited by the poetry of Anacreon and Horace (a transparent reference to Annenkov with his love of antiquity): a jolly chat at a moderate but exquisite table, comfort and women,--that is all they desire" (3: 300). Chenyshevsky stresses the one-sided and rather narrow nature of such an approach and asks the reader the rhetorical question whether literature should be limited by the epicurean tendency only or should it be devoted to the service of life and be a propagator of its ideas. He especially mercilessly criticizes those who, hiding behind the pure art rhetoric, in fact simply advocate the narrow tendency of Epicureanism.

Despite his obvious censure and contempt for this trend, Chernyshevsky tries to avoid ostracizing them altogether and admits that "epicurean spirit, being a part of life, does have a right to find its expression in literature, which should embrace life in all manifestations," but he immediately expresses the reservation that "in literature the

epicurean tendency may suit the taste of only a few fortunate lovers of idleness, but for the overwhelming majority of people such a tendency has always seemed tasteless and even decidedly offensive" (3: 301). Most importantly, Chernyshevsky considered this trend in literature to be stagnant, lifeless and non-productive, deprived of the energy and passion that life and history demanded at the moment from works of literature. In his opinion, it was capable of creating only literary trifles that were "cold, strained, colorless and rhetorical" (3: 301). Undoubtedly, it was a harsh and biased judgment of one of the oldest central ideas in art history, and we might say that Chernyshevsky failed to overcome the one-sidedness of his own materialistic outlook in his criticism. He credited N. I. Nadezhdin and Belinsky for the introduction of the formal principles of German philosophy into Russian literary criticism that gave an aesthetic grounding for literary analysis of the work of art and taught us that "beauty of form consists in its correspondence with the idea" (3: 163). In spite of the fact that he recognized the main criterion of the organic work of art--the unity of form and content--in his own criticism he tended to give preference to the "real" over the "ideal" instead of striving for the fusion of both, and allowing the ideal to enter the work of art on equal grounds with the real.

Tolstoy had become acquainted with Botkin's article in December of 1856 while it was still in manuscript. It obviously made a strong and lasting impression on him. Later on, right before a trip to Europe, Tolstoy reread this work and wrote an enthusiastic letter to Botkin on January 20, 1857 in which he called the article a "poetic catechism of poetry" that provided a theoretical basis for something that most people intuitively felt but could not express in words. Botkin's article clearly resonated with

Tolstoy's personal thoughts about the nature and purpose of art and provided him with food for thought during his European voyage. It found its expression later, upon Tolstoy's return to Russia, in the critical pamphlet *Notes from Lucerne*, where Tolstoy not only summarized his reflections on the injustices of the political and social order of Western Europe, but most importantly reworked and integrated some of Botkin's ideas about art into his own writing. As we will see, evidence of Botkin's influence can be traced not only in the highly poetic pathos of *Lucerne* but also in the phrasing of some of the central arguments that sometimes perfectly mirror expressions from Botkin's article.

Tolstoy undertakes a trip to Europe in February of 1857 and, upon his return to Yasnaya Polyana in August of the same year, his disappointment with the social and political system not only of Russia but also of Western Europe grows stronger than before. His anti-political sentiment at the time becomes one of the main dividing points between Tolstoy and Chernyshevsky. It draws Tolstoy even further away from the politically charged aesthetics of revolutionary democrats and brings him closer to the aesthetic position of the liberals. His mind-set finds its expression in numerous correspondence and diary entries from that period as well as the critical pamphlet *Notes from Lucerne* which was written shortly after Tolstoy's return from abroad and became a summary of his still fresh impressions of the trip. The essay did contain biting criticism of false bourgeois democracy and freedoms. Certainly, one of the main reasons for his harsh condemnation of the shortcomings of the European social and political order was a scene of execution by guillotine which Tolstoy witnessed in Paris and which shook him

to the core by its brutality and senselessness. We find the following entry in his diary concerning this event: "Got up sick at 7 a.m. and went to see the execution. A thick, white, healthy neck and chest. Kissed the Gospel and then--death, what an absurdity!--A powerful impression that left a mark" (*PSS* 47: 121). And then the same entry at the end of the day: "The guillotine kept me awake for a long time and made me look back." Tolstoy's European voyage had had a promising start but ended on this somber note. The reflections aroused by the execution scene reinforced his earlier skepticism about the possibility of the existence of a just political system that could accommodate equally the interests of all members of society, both rich and poor, and bring a satisfactory solution for the most burning social problems of the time. Upon his return to Russia, Tolstoy is trying hard to find some support for his shaken beliefs in everyday Russian life as well, as he settles in at Yasnaya Polyana but sees around himself only "patriarchal barbarity, stealing and lawlessness" that makes him an even firmer believer that one can find salvation from political and spiritual chaos only in the eternal verities of art. He feels very acutely the social inequalities and injustice surrounding him in his homeland, and he made serious efforts to remedy them: Tolstoy seriously considered the possibility of emancipating his 300 serfs and in April of 1856 he even drafted a memorandum to the Minister of Internal Affairs S. S. Lanskoy in which he revealed his plan to devise a contract between his peasants and himself that would allow him to transfer them from *corvée* to quit-rent. But despite all his efforts Tolstoy cannot find a solution that would lead to social harmony and the peaceful coexistence of classes. His personal efforts at liberation of his own

serfs are met by the peasants at Yasnaya Polyana with suspicion and hostility and have to be abandoned. So naturally, being a stark opponent of any revolutionary changes, Tolstoy chooses to withdraw from the political scene and finds his salvation behind the bulwark of eternal art. In August of 1857 Tolstoy writes a very indicative letter to his cousin A. A. Tolstaya in which he openly relates to her his bitter feelings of disappointment and dismay with the social and political situation in Russia:

> You wouldn't believe me that after my return to Russia I've had to wrestle for quite some time with a feeling of disgust towards my native country and only now I am starting to get used again to all the atrocities that have become a constant part of our everyday life. ...life in Russia is constant, never-ending toil and a struggle with one's feelings. It's a blessing that there is one salvation--the moral world, the world of art, poetry and personal attachments. There nobody, neither the district police officer nor the bailiff, will interfere: I am sitting alone, the wind is howling, it's muddy and cold outside, and I am playing Beethoven badly with numb, stiff fingers and shedding tears of emotion, or reading *The Iliad*, or making up characters, women. I live with them, mess around with writing [*maraiu bumagu*] and think of them, like right now, as of people whom I love. (*PSS* 60: 222)

These feelings were closely echoed in the correspondence between Tolstoy and Botkin during this period. Botkin for his part supports Tolstoy's views on the political situation in the country and reassures his friend in the thought that only art can bring beauty and harmony into their everyday existence. He informs Tolstoy about his readings of Homer and even encourages him to reread the Odyssey and the *Iliad* calling them a "soothing balm against reality" (*Perepiska s russkimi pisateliami* 1: 217).

The end of the year of 1856 and the beginning of 1857 is the period in Tolstoy's life that is marked by an intense search for answers about the place and purpose of literature in life; he also feels an acute need to work out his own attitude toward the problem not in the abstract but in a way that will help him to establish himself as a writer.

The depth of differences in aesthetic views between Tolstoy and the revolutionary democrats at that time becomes especially apparent when it comes to their interpretation of the function of art in the life of society. While Chernyshevsky, like Nekrasov, considered the civic mission of literature to be its paramount goal, one that in their view by far outweighed all other possible destinations of a work of art, Tolstoy, on the other hand, as if polemicizing with the main theses of Chernyshevsky's materialistic aesthetics, writes the following entry in his diary in April of 1857: "The Gospel words 'do not judge' are deeply true in art: tell, portray but do not judge" (*PSS* 47: 203). This assertion of need for an unbiased, objective attitude to life reveals Tolstoy's already-formed ideal of a writer-chronicler who impartially records the events of life through his gifts of observation and depiction.

Tolstoy follows Botkin's advice and spends the fall of 1857 engrossed in the reading of

Homer. Yet already he is struggling to find a firm ground for his wavering beliefs, and his trust in the saving grace of pure art principles is starting to dwindle. Tolstoy begins to doubt the possibility of creating the illusory safe haven where one can live happily and remain blissfully blind to the challenges and problems of the surrounding world. It becomes increasingly problematic for Tolstoy to sustain his literary career in the midst of what he sees as a major crisis of *belles-lettres* in Russia. The complexity of this inner struggle is revealed in another very emotional letter that Tolstoy writes to his cousin Alexandra Alexandrovna Tolstaya on October 18 of 1857 about a deep change in his "view on life":

> I cannot remember without laughing how I used to think (and as it seems you also think) that one can create a happy and honest little world where quietly, without mistakes, without remorse, without confusion, one can live slowly and do without haste, carefully, only good things. Ridiculous! Impossible, grandmother! Just as it is impossible to be healthy without physical activity and movement. In order to live honestly, you need to suffer longing, to get confused, to struggle, to make mistakes, to start and give up, and then start over and give up once more, and eternally struggle and lose something. And tranquility is the baseness of the soul. That's why the bad side of our soul desires peace and quiet without suspecting that the achievement of it entails the loss of everything that is beautiful, not just human but from the above. (*PSS* 60: 230)

Only two months separate this letter and the one written in August and cited above, but what an abrupt change of mood and direction in Tolstoy's outlook! The message is quite clear--complacency and self-appeasement are unacceptable, whether they come under the guise of an aesthetic teaching or as a personal attempt to retreat from active participation in life. This thought is once more emphatically repeated in another letter, written in October of 1857 to Botkin and Turgenev: "It was sad for me to part with the dream of a quiet and honest happiness without confusion, toil, mistakes, abandoned undertakings, remorse, dissatisfaction with myself and others, but I, thank God, have become sincerely convinced that the tranquility and purity that we are all looking for in life are not for us, and that the only legitimate happiness is honest labor and obstacles overcome" (*PSS* 60: 232). In the same letter, just down the page, Tolstoy also gives a rather detailed and insightful account of the chaotic atmosphere reigning in the literary circles of St. Petersburg at the time; he obviously feels out of sync with the new direction of literature and expresses his deep concern for the fate of literature in Russia, as he feels that it is being threatened by the rising movement of criticism and debunking. Despite the fact that Tolstoy declares to his friends that his point of view on the problem and his alliance with them has not changed, his hesitation and doubts not

only about his choice of path but also about his future as a writer can clearly be heard in the following lines:

> Thank God I didn't listen to Turgenev who was trying to prove to me that a literary man should only be a literary man. It wasn't in my nature. One cannot make a crutch out of literature or a whip, if you please, as W. Scott used to say. What would be my situation if they had knocked that crutch out just as it's happened now. *Our* literature, that is poetics, is if not an unlawful then an abnormal phenomenon, therefore, to build all your life upon it is unlawful. (*PSS* 60: 232)

So Tolstoy finds himself at the crossroads of the literary movements: he perceives the rise of the critical school headed by the revolutionary democrats as a general crisis in Russian literature, but although he is starting to feel the creative limitations of the pure art theory, he is not quite ready yet to break free from his personal and professional attachments to it. Tolstoy is searching for answers, and we may say that it is at this critical moment so early in his literary career that he displays the traits of a perpetual seeker--the ethical ideal that will become one of the trademarks of some of his main literary characters such as Olenin, Pierre Bezukhov, Prince Andrei and Nekhliudov just to name a few, as well as one of the cornerstones of his future ethical teaching. Tolstoy acutely realizes the need for himself to arrive at some sort of comprehensive understanding of the aesthetic problem that is stirring up the literary circles in order to be able to move forward in his creative work. He shifts his focus in pondering the most vital problems of art--his desire is not only to understand what constitutes artistic genius and what goals in life it should serve, but also to voice his position as a writer. We know that aesthetics will be a lifelong quest for Tolstoy, and that he will return to this task much later in life in his influential tract *What is Art?* (1898), that it will unify and

summarize his forty years of reflection about the nature and purpose of art. We also know that the author will arrive at a somewhat different conclusion in his later work, stating that all good art is related to the authentic life of the broader community and that the aesthetic value of a work of art is not independent of its moral content. But for now let us return to the Tolstoy of the mid 50s, the Tolstoy who is still looking to define his aesthetic position. Thus far, out of this intense intellectual brooding and doubt there was born a concept not of a tract but of a story that took as its subject matter the fate of an altruistic and talented servant of arts and in its final version received the title "Albert."

Chapter III: Tolstoy's Early Literary Aestheticism

"ALBERT" – THE PURE ART MANIFESTO

The conception of "Albert" helped Tolstoy to crystallize his aesthetic views as well as to express his deep personal passion for music. Tolstoy spends the winter of 1856-1857 in Petersburg in an atmosphere filled with music and heated debates about art. Always a music-lover, Tolstoy finds himself under its spell and becomes especially interested in opera and home music playing during this period. It is not accidental that some of the best pages of the story conceived at that time are dedicated to the exceptionally accurate and at the same time inspired description of the influence that music has upon its listeners. It is probable that the desire to express his thoughts on the role and purpose of art had already matured in Tolstoy's mind at the point when he accidentally met the talented violinist Georg Kizevetter, who subsequently became the prototype for the main character of the tale. Tolstoy invited Kizevetter to his house (like Delesov in "Albert"), found him a violin somewhere and delighted in his playing. Tolstoy was struck by the amazing contradiction between the outward appearance of this person, degraded and ruined by drink, and the artistic fire that burned within him when he was playing his instrument. Only a few days after making the acquaintance of Kizevetter on January 9, 1857 Tolstoy jots down the beginning of his future story.

We can trace the creative process that surrounded the making of the story and the numerous corrections of the initial text through the correspondence between Tolstoy and Nekrasov that took place in November and December of 1857. These letters contain interesting facts and valuable information about Tolstoy's immense

creative struggle with a work that in its final version occupies only about ten pages and provide us with insight into the high level of seriousness with which Tolstoy treated this topic. "Albert " was intended to be a treatise on art written in the language of art, and later Tolstoy, trying to defend his original idea, would call Nekrasov's attention to this important characteristic of the story. In "Albert," Tolstoy raises the question of the great influence of art, of its "infectiousness" (the definition that he will later develop in *What is Art?)* and its absolute power over the human soul. Albert is a degraded but talented musician, his outward appearance--that of a drunkard--is rather unattractive and even repulsive to some but when he plays the violin he is completely transformed and becomes a god; he wholly surrenders himself to the delight of his art and conquers others with his inspired playing. Everybody present at his performance was stunned and transported into another world. In the final chapter of the tale a painter named Petrov voices some thoughts about art in a soliloquy which can be very much attributed to Tolstoy and the aesthetes. He speaks of the musician as a person who achieved greatness, and who has realized in his life "everything that was put into him by God. He is happy and kind. He equally loves or despises everybody and serves only the one end that was bestowed upon him from above. He loves one thing--beauty, the only indisputable good in the world" (*PSS* 5: 49). These words were emblematic of the ideas propagated in the articles of Botkin and other champions of the pure art theory. In the second redaction of the tale the burning character of the topic and its closeness to Tolstoy's personal experience were expressed even more prominently: one of the main characters, Delesov (just like Tolstoy himself), is said to

be trying to find refuge in art against "all life's contradictions" (*PSS* 5: 297).

TOLSTOY'S CREATIVE STRUGGLE WITH THE TEXT

Tolstoy worked feverishly on his new story during his trip to Europe and completed its initial draft in a month and a half. According to his diary, he read "The Ne'er-do-well"--the original title for "Albert "-- to Turgenev on March 1, but the work did not produce a favorable impression on his friend and left him untouched or "cold" in Tolstoy's own words (*PSS* 47: 117). The author himself was not satisfied with the results and in the summer of 1857 Tolstoy resumed work on the story, which now acquired a new title "Povrezhdennyi" ["The Impaired"]. Corrections and rewriting continue through the fall, and the letters to Nekrasov contain evidence of Tolstoy's creative struggle with the text – at least five times he recalls proof-sheets that have already been composed for printing and sends last minute urgent and "most necessary" changes to Nekrasov of some sections that are as Tolstoy puts it "thoroughly bad" (*PSS* 60: 239). A third redaction of the story was finished on October 5, 1857 with yet another variant of the title, this time "Pogibshii" ["The Ruined One"] and was sent to *The Contemporary* for publication, but Nekrasov replied that he considered the story unsuccessful and advised Tolstoy not to print it. We can only speculate about the true reason behind Nekrasov's rejection of the work; it might have been conditioned in the fact that by that time Chernyshevsky had become an influential and permanent member of the editorial board in *Sovremennik,* and Nekrasov personally had a propensity towards many of his views on the didactic mission of art. In any case, the explanation that he gave to Tolstoy in his letter from December

16 gave as the main reason for his decision to postpone publication, Tolstoy's "unsuccessful choice of subject" and his inability to "credibly convey the genius side of his main character" (*PSS* 60: 244). It is edifying to read some excerpts from the letter to appreciate the degree of personal sincerity and persuasiveness of Nekrasov's professional advice:

> My darling and dearly-beloved Lev Nikolaevich, your tale has been composed, I have read it and following the dictates of my conscience I must tell you frankly that it is not good and that we must not publish it. The main reason for your failure lies in the unsuccessful choice of the plot which is, not to mention rather trite, also almost impossibly difficult and thankless. While the dirty seamy side of your character leaps off the page, how can it be possible tangibly, convincingly to show the genius side? And as long as that is not present, there is no story either. Everything about the background, however, is very good: that is Delesov, the pompous old man etc, but everything central has come out somewhat preposterous and unnecessary. No matter how you may regard your main character with his love and deep-rooted inner world--he needs a doctor and art has nothing to do with him. This is the impression that the story will produce on the general public; the narrow-minded philosophizers will take it even further, they will be saying that you are promoting a drunkard, an idler and a scoundrel as the ideal of a man and they will find many supporters. Yes, this is the kind of work that provides a lot of opportunities for attacks on the author, not only by intelligent people but even more by the foolish ones. If you disagree with me and decide to turn the matter over to public opinion, I will publish the story. (*PSS* 60: 244)

In the end, Nekrasov extends a piece of friendly advice to Tolstoy regarding the kind of literature that, in his opinion, Tolstoy is better equipped to write and that will be favorably accepted by the reading public, "simpler," unaffected works that are less complex and sophisticated:

> Eh! Write simpler things! I recalled the beginning of your Cossack novel, recalled the two hussars and marveled, what else are you searching for? There is your real genre right at hand and in your power, the genre that will never become boring because it portrays life and not its exceptions. In addition to your knowledge of life you also have the talent for psychological insight and the poetic, what else do you need in order to write good--simple, calm and clear tales. (*PSS* 60: 244)

However, Tolstoy did not accept Nekrasov's advice, at least at the moment, and persevered in his resolution to publish what he himself called "the rejected musician"

(*PSS* 60: 254). After Nekrasov's initial decision to abandon the ill-fated piece, Tolstoy, nevertheless, asked him to return the manuscript and undertook another round of corrections. The story was eventually published in *The Contemporary* only in August of 1858 under the final title "Albert."

Tolstoy fundamentally disagreed with Nekrasov on the question of the literary value of the subject for the plot of the story as well as the degree to which his writer's task was fulfilled in it. He clarified his initial intent for the creation of such an aesthetically exclusive work and drew Nekrasov's attention to the important stylistic characteristics of "Albert " in a letter from December 18, written in response to Nekrasov's critical advice:

> There is no doubt that this is not a normative tale but an exceptional one that in its meaning all hinges on its psychological and lyrical aspects and thus, it cannot appeal to the majority, but to what degree the task was fulfilled is another question. I know that I fulfilled it to the best of my ability (excluding the finishing touches of style). This thing cost me a whole year of almost exclusive work, but as I can see, for others it will seem to miss the target, therefore, it would be better to consign it to oblivion, for which I thank you very, very much. Only send me please the manuscript or the proof-sheets so that I could make all the necessary corrections while it is still fresh in my memory and hide it away all as far as possible. (*PSS* 60: 243)

However, to do justice to Nekrasov's professional journalistic instinct, we should say that he turned out to be right in his doubts about the public success of "Albert." The literary critics practically ignored the appearance of the story with the exception of some brief and glancing reviews in such journals as *Syn otechestva* [*Son of the Fatherland*] and *Severnyi tsvetok* [*The Northern Flower*]. The reviewer of the moderately liberal journal *Syn otechestva,* while disagreeing with the author on some important issues, also pointed out some strong parts in the tale, in particular the scene

between Albert and Delesov. Other critical reviews contained mostly rebukes to Tolstoy for his unsuccessful choice of subject and the general tone of the story. The main problem raised by the author--concerning the nature of art and inspiration--was not even touched upon by the critics. So what is the likely reason behind Tolstoy's lack of success with the story that cost him so much time and effort but was recognized neither by his close literary friends and critics nor by his readers? Perhaps the nature of that idealistic interpretation of art that lay at the core of his creative concept, joined to Tolstoy's tendency towards a certain elitism in the choice of the theme, did not help to popularize the story or make it the subject of wide discussion. In "Albert " Tolstoy proclaimed beauty as "the only indisputable good in the world" and the motifs of the chosen one, and the "sacred fire" that is put into the artist from above echoed Schelling's idealistic theory of art that was passionately admired and championed by Botkin. One of the strongest qualities of the story, though, lies in Tolstoy's desire to captivate and entrance the reader by the depiction of the spontaneous and all-conquering power of music and his attempt to show how it elevates, ennobles and provides moral purification to even the most fallen and outcast of persons.

"Albert" was intended to become a sort of theoretical treatise presented in artistic form on the topic of the "freedom of the creative process" (Botkin 202). It is important to mention, though, that despite Tolstoy's rejection of tendentiousness and didacticism in art at this point in his literary career, in "Albert" he himself was writing a work with a clearly didactic intention--the contradiction was quite obvious. Toward the middle of 1857,

Tolstoy grew completely cold to the work as can be judged from his diary. The following entry made on September 18 is rather characteristic: "I wrote quite a lot but the whole thing is bad. I want to knock it off as soon as possible" (*PSS* 47: 157). As can be seen, the author continued to persevere in his resolve to bring his conception to completion, whereas his inner conviction about the truth of the main idea in the story had already left him. All of these factors, undoubtedly, contributed to the unfortunate fate of "Albert."

COMPARATIVE TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE TALE WITH ITS THIRD REDACTION

Now let us turn to the story itself for a closer examination of the text that should help us to reveal more fully Tolstoy's original intention and its roots, as well as some stylistic peculiarities of the work that will lead us directly to the question of Tolstoy's rhetoric. As has been mentioned earlier, before its appearance in *Sovremennik* in August of 1858, "Albert" underwent numerous corrections and at least three separate redactions. The third version of the story comes closest to the final printed version of the text. It was preserved completely in manuscript and provides valuable insight into the important changes in Tolstoy's perception of the main character and the development of the story line. It also presents considerable interest for us from the point of view of the authorial presence and the rhetorical problems associated with it, as some of the discourse in this version is much more developed and overtly present compared to the published text. So our textual analysis will be complicated by the comparative element as we will try to superimpose the two versions of "Albert "in order to highlight their important stylistic

and rhetorical characteristics.

Tolstoy begins his narration from the description of a small ball where the cream of the crop of young Petersburg aristocratic society has gathered to dispel their *ennui*, yet the reader immediately finds himself in the atmosphere of boredom and uneasiness. Everything seems to be proper and *comme il faut;* all the attributes of a high society ball are present: good musicians who play one polka after another, young and beautiful women, lots of champagne and dancing, yet the most important ingredient--the sense of having a good time--is not there. And no matter how hard the guests try to elevate the level of merrymaking, they feel unable to capture the spirit and as the author comments, "the affected gaiety was even worse than boredom." It is remarkable that social criticism enters Tolstoy's allegedly purely aesthetic story from the very first page and never quite leaves it to the very end. Tolstoy is already working out the material for the high society ball scenes that he will develop in much greater detail in his subsequent novel *Family Happiness* and which eventually will reach their climax and crystallize in all their splendor and complexity of emotions in *War and Peace*. The ball scene in "Albert" is strangely evocative of the earlier one in *Childhood* where little Nikolenka feels awkward and overwhelmed at his first ball with all the requirements of propriety and high society etiquette that prevent him from uninhibited childlike merrymaking. However, his childish spontaneity prevails and as soon as he manages to shed the conventions, he releases his emotions and is able to enjoy himself. Unfortunately, our grownup and sophisticated characters in "Albert" do not possess these liberating childlike qualities anymore and have to be hostages of their own social status.

With the first appearance of Albert, Tolstoy establishes the dominant themes that will accompany his descriptions throughout the story--they are, by contrast, infectiousness and the attributes of a holy fool. As soon as the musician is introduced to the reader, we are struck by the contrast between his shaggy and untidy clothing and the almost god-like features of his face with its clean forehead, dark, tired eyes and fresh lips. There is something "captivating" in the expression of his eyes, and his contagious smile is immediately passed on to the displeased and annoyed Delesov. As the story progresses, together with the other characters of the tale the reader experiences the captivating and infectious qualities of Albert's playing, but for now Tolstoy only subtly hints at the presence of these powers in the musician.

When Delesov asks the servant about Albert, he is characterized as an "insane musician" and, indeed, all his behavior seems as if he were not of this world, his uncombed hair, the rags he is dressed in and most of all his strange movements during the dance resemble the deranged behavior of a holy fool: “The thin, weak limbs of the musician suddenly came into active motion, and winking, smiling, and twitching, he began to prance awkwardly and heavily about the room" (*PSS* 5: 28). These characteristic features of Albert were taken by the author from his real-life prototype, Georg Kizevetter, whose ambiguous appearance staggered Tolstoy at their first meeting. We find the following description of the musician in the writer's diary from January 8 1857: "He is intelligent, brilliant and sane. He is an ingenious holy fool. He played delightfully" (*PSS* 47: 110).

Another of the most important characteristics of Albert is his ability to be transformed or even reborn in his music. When he is not playing, he presents a rather pathetic and pitiful spectacle: he is timid and weak and his eyes are dull with no light in them, but as soon as he picks up the violin and the first clear and harmonious sounds start flowing from it, he becomes the most powerful person in the room, a lord who has unlimited power over his listeners' souls. His gestures become "authoritative" and with each note he grows taller and taller until he overwhelms the whole space with his presence. His listeners subconsciously recognize and accept Albert's authority; it is reflected in the complete silence that reigns in the room during Albert's performance, and in their motionless, submissive poses.

The audience willingly falls under Albert's spell as if they have a premonition of the heavenly journey that he is empowered to take them on. The musician is capable of taking them out of this "state of boredom, noisy dissipation and emotional slumber" that they all languish in and to transport them to "another, forgotten world" (*PSS* 5: 30). No one can stop time, but for a brief moment Albert becomes its keeper and his music like a time capsule transports its listeners to the happiest and most cherished moments in their past that they would not have been able to access otherwise. The sounds of music unlock the gates of their memory, and the emotions they experience make them alive again if only for a short moment; every one of them would gladly exchange years of their present existence for just a few moments like these:

> Now a calm contemplation of the past arose in their souls, now an impassioned memory of some past happiness, now a boundless desire for power and splendor, now a feeling of resignation, of unsatisfied love and sadness. Sounds now tenderly sad, now vehemently despairing, mingled freely, flowing and flowing one after the other so elegantly, so

> strongly, and so unconsciously, that the sounds themselves were not noticed, but there flowed of itself into the soul a beautiful torrent of poetry, long familiar but only now expressed. (*PSS* 5: 30)

In "Albert" Tolstoy takes on the very difficult task of depicting credibly, without excessive sentimentality, the powerful impact of music on its listeners. It is a challenging task as he is trying to blur the boundaries between the two kinds of art--auditory and verbal trying to translate into words what has been expressed only in sounds. Despite the fact that he is dealing with the most ephemeral and elusive substance, Tolstoy brilliantly manages to capture the essence of the experience by materializing it for the reader. Albert's music evokes a whirlwind of emotions in his listeners that are triggered by the sounds slowly pouring from the violin and this "beautiful flow" of sounds is given by the author a very tangible and real name--poetry, the "long familiar but expressed for the first time (*PSS* 5: 30). Music becomes poetry, and as a matter of fact, it is poetry, something that can be expressed in words, which gives music material form and allows Tolstoy to communicate such sublime moments so effectively to the reader. The writer presents music as a conduit for the outpouring of the musician's soul that flows into the listeners' souls as a "beautiful torrent" that finds its expression in poetry. Albert is alive only when he comes in contact with music because it helps him to overcome the reality he lives in, where he feels maladjusted and insignificant; music elevates him to the heights of his soul and it is the secret life of his soul that Albert shares with the listeners through his music. It is no coincidence that Tolstoy emphasizes throughout the story how drained and weak Albert is left after each of his performances, when the reverse transformation takes place: the flame that is

burning within him is extinguished as soon as music ceases, his eyes grow dim, and he resembles a lifeless bodily shell abandoned by the soul: "Then his back sagged, his head hung down, his lips closed, his eyes grew dim, and he timidly glanced round as if ashamed of himself, and made his way stumblingly into the other room" (*PSS* 5: 32). As mentioned earlier, Tolstoy builds Albert's image on contrastive oppositions as if he is trying to communicate to the reader the fragility and fleeting character of an artist's world, leaving it for the reader to decide who is in front of him--a talented musician or nothing more than a pathetic drunk. Compare, for example, the passage cited above with the one describing Albert during his performance: "His face shone with uninterrupted, ecstatic joy; his eyes burnt with a bright, dry brilliance, his nostrils expanded, his red lips opened with delight" (*PSS* 5: 32). His benefactor Delesov is also trying to solve the dilemma of Albert's sudden metamorphosis as he is taking the musician home after the party. During the carriage ride the magic seems to vanish as Albert turns into a disgusting drunk whose dirtiness and stupid and trivial remarks repel Delesov and make him repent his action. In the dark, the musician's face looks grotesque and surreal, but when Delesov takes a closer look, he is able to distinguish Albert's features and the "beauty of his forehead and his calmly closed lips strike him again" (*PSS* 5: 35). The gift of a few blissful memories given to Delesov by Albert's music that evening, when he was able to relive some of the happiest moments of his past, made such a lasting impression on him that just by looking at that face Delesov "let himself again be carried back to the blissful world into which he had glanced that night; he again recalled the happy and magnanimous days of his youth and no longer repented of what he had done"

(*PSS* 5: 35).

Generally speaking, the theme of the inner fire and light that burns within Albert and which consumes him penetrates the entire work and deserves special treatment as it is directly connected with the problem of inspiration that Tolstoy treats with great attention in the story. The descriptions of Albert when he comes in contact with music are filled with epithets pertaining to fire and light: "his face shone with ecstatic joy," "his eyes burnt with a bright, dry brilliance," "the beaming look he cast round the room gleamed with pride," "his eyes burnt and glowed," "his eyes glistened" (*PSS* 5: 31-32). During the conversation about music that Delesov intentionally starts with Albert, the musician defends all types of music, as he is capable of discerning beauty and drawing enjoyment equally from old and new musical works. He disagrees with Delesov when the latter with his high-society snobbism is trying to categorize music into high classical versus low operatic entertainment as for Albert there are no boundaries in the world of music--the only measure is its beauty. Albert experiences music with all his being, he does not reflect about it but rather lives through every piece he plays. Music like an electrical charge shoots through his body and gives Albert ineffable enjoyment and torment. It seems that this haunting quality of music is just as important for Albert as its pleasure-giving property as it is a sure indication of that passion which according to Albert is one of the main requirements for an artist, because only passion can be infectious for the listeners and touch them deeply to light the fire within them. Delesov asks Albert's opinion of the opera and the conversation turns to the Italian operatic singers Angidina Bosio and Luigi Lablanche who were stirring up the actual

Petersburg music scene in the 1850s. In his characterization of both singers, Albert confirms his conviction that passion and the fire born of it are the two essential qualities of any good artist: "'Bosio is good, very good', he said, 'extraordinarily exquisite, but she does not touch one here,' pointing to his sunken chest. 'A singer needs passion, and she has none. She gives pleasure but does not torment"' (*PSS* 5: 39). And a little later he observes about Lablanche, who was regarded one of the leading bass singers of his time: "'I heard him in Paris in the *Barbier de Seville*. He was unique then, but now he is old: he cannot be an artist, he is old. An artist should not be old. Much is needed for art, but above all, fire!' said he with glittering eyes and stretching both arms upwards. And a terrible inner fire really seemed to burn in his whole body" (*PSS* 5: 39).

In the closing seventh chapter of the tale Tolstoy reintroduces the theme of fire in the apologia of Albert delivered by the musician's friend Petrov, when Albert is experiencing vivid dream-like hallucinations. Albert is compared here to a "blade of straw that has been consumed by the holy fire that he served" (*PSS* 5: 49). The earlier motif of the chosen one and of holiness is reinforced here in connection with the musician's calling for which Tolstoy finds a very emotional, concise and almost proverbial formulation:

> He has fulfilled all that God implanted in him and should therefore be called a great man. You could despise, torment, humiliate him but he was, is, and will be, immeasurably higher than all of you. He is happy, he is kind. He loves or despises all alike, but serves only that which was implanted in him from above. He loves but one thing--beauty, the one indubitable blessing in the world. Yes, such is the man! Fall prostrate before him, all of you! On your knees! (*PSS* 5: 49)

At this point it is interesting for us to compare the final version to the third

redaction of the text where the theme of holy fire receives a much more detailed treatment from Tolstoy. There it is not only more concrete and more prominent but also is complicated by the social problem of public usefulness of art. And once again, as with the transformation of Albert's music into poetry, the author renders concrete the metaphorical image of the all-consuming burning fire by giving it a very real and tangible definition as the "happiness of poetry," thus taking it out of the realm of the imaginary and transporting it into the literary. In the third redaction the role of the apologist is given to Biriuzovskii, a painter, who engages in a heated argument over Albert with another high-society guest Alenin, a recognized authority on music, someone who was invited to Delesov's soirée to evaluate Albert's talent. Alenin who considers himself a connoisseur of music is obviously deprived of any true aesthetic feeling, as are some of the other guests, and is armed with high-society arrogance and prejudice. The author masterfully manages to incorporate the problem of social inequality and class division into the discussion of art. Alenin is not capable of overcoming his bias and looking beyond the musician's shabby appearance. Thus he fails to appreciate the beauty of Albert's music and the power of inspiration radiating from him. However, another guest invited by Delesov to the party, the fashionable French pianist Picheau, who initially is also repulsed by Albert's untidy appearance and refuses to accompany him on the piano, not wishing to stoop to the fallen musician's level, completely changes his opinion of Albert as the evening unfolds. He recognizes in him the kindred spirit of a true musician and is able to share some inspired moments with Albert at the piano: "Picheau meanwhile, having completely forgotten the pride of a fashionable

pianist, brought a bottle of wine to the piano and was drinking together with Albert, talking and playing, not paying any attention to anybody" (*PSS* 5: 159).

Alenin condemns Albert for his inability to adapt to the demands of society and be a functional and useful member of it. He pronounces a harsh judgment on Albert's inadequacies, as in his eyes the musician is nothing more than a "foul farce player with neither knowledge nor talent," a "sore on the body of serious art" (*PSS* 5: 159-160). However, his antagonist Biriuzovskii raises his voice in defense of Albert's selfless dedication to the cause of art which does not aim to serve the utilitarian needs of any particular class of society but rather the universal, perpetual needs of human kind for beauty and inspiration. Biriuzovskii passionately speaks of the musician's ultimate sacrifice that he has brought to the altar of art: he has given his whole life to the last drop for "us, for the most precious cause of humankind, for poetry" (*PSS* 5: 160). We can clearly hear the motif of holiness and martyrdom that was first evoked by Tolstoy in the opening scene where Albert bears a strong resemblance to a holy fool. Albert's life is free of the usual mercantilism and egocentrism, he does not seek profit or rank, which makes him an outcast in a society that measures success by material gain. Yet, in the eyes of Biriuzovskii, Albert achieved greatness and happiness because he dared to cast aside all the societal conventions and chose to fulfill his calling of an artist:

> This is a person who has been consumed by that sacred fire that we all serve, that we love more than anything in the world. The fire of the happiness of poetry! This fire burns others and it is so hard for someone who carries it inside him not to burn out himself. And he has been consumed to the end because there was much fire within him and he served it faithfully. We will not be consumed, don't fret. God did not give us this fire, besides we stifle by our everyday vileness, profit-seeking and egoism that tiny spark that has been burning in us. But he has been consumed completely like a blade of straw, therefore, he is great. (*PSS* 5: 160)

Alenin ironically inquires of Biriuzovskii what use the musician with his "fire" has been to society. He does not consider useful what is not profitable, but he overlooks a far more important desire of humankind that reaches beyond the material wealth--the desire to express our thoughts, feelings and views that has found its reflection in poetry, music and painting since the beginning of time. It is in art that we find an expression for our most personal and cherished thoughts, our best ideals and aspirations that might be more valuable and real to us than any material possessions. Thus an artist who serves this noble cause selflessly and faithfully provides an invaluable service to the society: he rekindles in it the need for beauty and ideals that so often are the motive forces behind the life and progress of any human society. The life of such a public servant will never pass in vain and being consumed himself, he will transmit this light to others. In a heated argument with Alenin, Biriuzovskii voices Tolstoy's understanding of the artist's role in society, which is definitely in keeping not only with the fiery imagery pervading Albert's descriptions but also is organically connected to the idea of the infectiousness of art that will become so important for Tolstoy later: "He does what he was appointed to do from above and he is great, because he who has carried out what God had ordered, he has been of use, not the near-sighted use that you understand, but the use of not wasting away his life like all of us--he will be consumed himself and will illuminate others..." (*PSS* 5: 160).

BOTKIN'S ARTICLE AS A SOURCE OF TOLSTOY'S CREATIVE INSPIRATION

As we have already mentioned, Tolstoy as a writer takes on a number of challenging tasks in the story by inviting the reader to an open discussion of some of the most important and elusive aesthetic issues connected with art, he works on a cross-sensory level to capture in words and recreate for us the poetry of musical experience (music converted into words) as well as offers the reader his undoubtedly heartfelt and inspired definition of art that is, nevertheless, deeply rooted in the aesthetic teachings of his literary friends. As we know, Tolstoy was deeply influenced by Botkin's article dedicated to the early poetry of his life-long friend Afanasii Fet published in *The Contemporary* in 1857. He not only admired Botkin's highly poetic style but most importantly the ability of the author to provide a theoretical basis for the problems of artistic creation and poetry that. in Tolstoy's own words, "most people intuitively felt but could not express in words" (*PSS* 60: 153). For him this article was a manifesto not so much of the pure art theory but of the universal humanistic ideas that the author was compelled to defend against the attacks of a rising materialistic world outlook. Botkin's essay became an inspiration behind *Notes from Lucerne* and of course "Albert," where Tolstoy reworked and integrated some of the central postulates that constituted the essence of the article, such as the discussion of the nature of art and its origins as being rooted in the idea of the beautiful, as well as the focus on the hedonistic and pleasure-giving properties of art.

There is a very characteristic passage in the story where Tolstoy arrives at his definition of art--it is important not only because of its climactic function in the defense

of Albert, but even more because it offers us a glimpse into the process of primary source material adaptation by Tolstoy. The passage is permeated with religious references that arrest your attention at the very first reading. These references are present in both versions of the text under our examination, however, the divine theme is more overtly stated and developed in the third version of the text. In the final printed version this excerpt is the culmination of Petrov's apologia of Albert where the religious overtones are muted and more prominence is given to the motif of the ultimate sacrifice by the artist in the name of art and the chosenness of his path: "Art is the highest manifestation of power in man. It is given to a few of the elect, and raises the chosen one to such a height as turns the head and makes it difficult for him to remain sane. In art, as in every struggle, there are heroes who have devoted themselves entirely to its service and have perished without having reached the goal" (*PSS* 5: 50). It is interesting to compare this passage to the one in the third version where Tolstoy takes the development of the divine theme further and that clearly indicates the connection of what he writes with Botkin's essay: "Art is the highest manifestation of power in man. It is not a plaything, not a means for making money and reputation, it is given to a few of the elect. It raises the chosen one to a height so unusual for a human that it makes your head turn and it is hard to remain sane. Art is the effect of a preternatural effort, outbursts and struggle. Struggle with God--this is what art is, yes" (*PSS* 5: 161-162). This excerpt is very evocative of certain passages in the article, not only in the general mood and style of the expression but especially in the idea of the divine presence connected with the act of artistic creation as discussed by Botkin. According to

Tolstoy, art endows man with supernatural creative powers and makes him the equal of God, the Creator Himself. It is a challenge of greater than human potential as this process unleashes sometimes mysterious and unknown forces that are hard to grasp or control, but also it is a challenge of God's creative supremacy and His unlimited power over the human consciousness. Similarly, Botkin uses an allusion to the struggle of the Titans against the Olympian Gods in his discussion of the Greeks and the idea of the all-conquering beauty that was discovered by them and superseded their religious outlook, indeed, became their only religion. We read:

> An ancient Greek felt the beauty of nature so deeply that this beauty seized his whole consciousness, turned for him into a religious feeling, permeated all of his religious conceptions and became their form and essence. This sense of beauty was one of the greatest revelations for the human spirit: it entirely changed the life of man and the nature of history.... For the first time the divine was presented in a human form. Everything hideous, chaotic, monstrous, uncivilized was cast down into Tartarus together with the Titans. ... Merely the great struggle of the Titans with the Olympian Gods alludes to the kind of upheavals that preceded the final recognition of the Olympic deities. (Botkin 199)

Botkin continues to develop the thought that the spheres of religious belief and art are closely connected and intertwined. He notes that the "most direct and natural language of the religious feeling of the ancients was poetry; it appeared together with the awoken consciousness of man. Thus the essence of art is rooted in the innate human urge for the expression of our thoughts, feelings and views in an image or a word. Here is contained the root of all the arts and poetry--and we should admit, this is a more real root than the machines and other practical inventions that exist in consequence of transient economic conditions, whereas art and poetry are the inborn qualities of the human soul" (Botkin 200). The main idea of this excerpt bears a strong resemblance to

the passages in the third version of Tolstoy's story where the painter Biriuzovskii is trying to find the right argumentation in his defense of Albert against the mercantile and petty attacks of Alenin. Undoubtedly, Tolstoy draws some invaluable material for building his own argument concerning the question of the public usefulness of art in "Albert " from the following discussion of the practical application of such non-material phenomena as works of art conducted by Botkin in his essay:

> Generally speaking, any phenomenon, any creation that has some kind of effect in the world--no matter whether it appears in the visible, practical sphere or in the moral sphere--first and foremost is distinguished by its strong applicability to life, and this, in fact, constitutes the practical property of every phenomenon. In a similar way, if a work of art by exciting and touching our hearts brings us spiritual enjoyment, then precisely by this factual reality of the sensations produced by it, it enters the habits of our life, becomes an active element in it and often exerts an incomparably bigger and deeper practical effect than thousands of phenomena that are called practical by the force of habit. (195)

Just like Botkin in his essay, Tolstoy also gives a lot of consideration in his story to the problem of the spontaneity or involuntary nature of the creative process. Albert is capable of playing only when he feels inspired and free. As a matter of fact, he plays brilliantly at moments of high emotional intensity when he is balancing on the edge of insanity. During his midnight conversation with Albert, Delesov finds out about the musician's unrequited love for some aristocratic lady and that fateful night at the theater when Albert goes mad from his passion. As Albert recounts the experiences of his unfortunate love story, he becomes extremely agitated and impulsive, as if something comes over him. He finds an expression for his broken heart through the musical feeling inspired by the sadness of his memories: "Delesov looked silently and in terror at the pale and agitated face of his companion. 'Do you know the *"Juristen-Waltzer?"'*

Albert suddenly exclaimed, and without awaiting an answer he jumped up, seized the violin, and began to play the merry waltz tune, forgetting himself completely, and evidently imagining that a whole orchestra was playing with him. He smiled, swayed, shifted his feet, and played superbly" (*PSS* 5: 43). As the night unfolds and the conversation turns to the subject of the opera, Albert once again is moved by reminiscences of his past life, when he was closely connected with the theater and used to play second violin at the Opera: "Without answering, Albert jumped up, seized the violin, and began playing the finale of the first act of *Don Giovanni,* telling the story of the opera in his own words. Delesov felt the hair rise on his head as Albert played the voice of the dying Commendatore." Tolstoy draws our attention to the spontaneity and instinctive character of Albert's behavior. He gives no explanation for these impulsive musical outpourings of Albert's emotions, as if to show solidarity with Botkin's assertion that the true creative power is unconscious and spontaneous. In his discussion of poetry, Botkin notes that the process of rendering phenomena of the inner or outer world is always mysterious and elusive. He shares the opinion of the German philosopher Schelling on the question of the intuitive nature of artistic creation. Schelling stated that not everything in art is done consciously and that together with the conscious act there must be present some unconscious power, and only a complete confluence and interaction of the two can produce greatness in art. Similarly, Botkin argues that spontaneity is one of the most important elements of poetry that shows its deep connection with nature. He compares the poet to the ancient Pythia who "prophesied only when she felt the presence of the divine inside, and the poet alike

creates truly poetic works only when he is drawn to it by the inner, power unknown to him" (Botkin 207). As an illustration of this spontaneous sudden yearning that seizes the poet's whole being, Botkin quotes a stanza from Pushkin's lyric "The Poet": He runs, uncouth and grim, / Replete with sound and with perturbance / To the shores of the desolate waves, / To broadly-murmuring wildwoods..." (*Pushkin Threefold* 219).

This is yet another evidence of the strong influence exerted by Botkin's essay on the creation of "Albert," as for one of the draft versions of the story under the variant title *Povrezhdennyi,* Tolstoy selected an epigraph from another of Pushkin's famous lyrics "The Poet and the Crowd": Не для корысти, не для битв,/ Мы рождены для вдохновенья,/ Для звуков сладких и молитв. Not for profit-seeking, not for battles, / We are born for inspiration, / For sweet sounds and prayers."

When reading "Albert" it is impossible not to notice the atmosphere of pleasure or enjoyment that Tolstoy creates around the music scenes in the novella. The Russian word *naslazhdenie* [pleasure, enjoyment, delight] is repeated many times throughout the text in connection with Albert's playing. This feeling of the enjoyment evoked by music is contagious as it is experienced not only by the musician himself during the blissful moments of complete immersion into his music, but it is also transmitted to the listeners, who are often transported in their memory to the most unforgettable and cherished moments of their lives. We read that when Albert was playing "his face shone with uninterrupted, ecstatic joy; his eyes burnt with a bright, dry brilliance, his nostrils expanded, his red lips opened *with delight.* ... All who were in the room preserved a submissive silence while Albert was playing, and seemed to live and

breathe only in his music. ...The hostess's fat smiling face expanded *with pleasure. ...By* some strange concatenation of impressions the first sounds of Albert's violin carried Delesov back to his early youth. ...All the unappreciated moments of that time arose before him one after another, not as insignificant moments of a fleeting present, but as arrested, growing, reproachful images of the past. He contemplated them *with delight,* and wept--wept not because the time was past that he might have spent better (if he had it again he would not have undertaken to employ it better), but merely because it was past and would never return.... Towards the end of the last variation Albert's face grew red, his eyes burnt and glowed, and large drops of perspiration ran down his cheeks. The veins of his forehead swelled up, his whole body came more and more into motion, his pale lips no longer closed, and his whole figure expressed the *ecstasy of enjoyment."* Notably, the enjoyment that Albert experiences together with his listeners grows into almost sensual pleasure by the end of the performance. Despite Albert's shabby appearance and the reputation of a lunatic, he gains access to the aristocratic circles of Petersburg precisely because of his ability to provide with his music that spiritual gratification that they all desire. Even Delesov's impulsive decision to help the musician springs from a few brief moments of delight experienced by him under the influence of Albert's music--Delesov falls in love with Albert for the pleasure that he is empowered to give.

Certainly, this hedonistic aspect of the story, so scornfully regarded by Chernyshevsky and his supporters, had strong correlations with some ideas related to poetry expressed by Botkin in his article. It is easy to see just from the following few

quotes how much Botkin's understanding of the subject resonated with Tolstoy's interpretation--it is evident not only in the phrasing and the general direction of the argument but also in the choice of vocabulary:

> Poetic feeling may be called the sixth and most supreme sense of man. It is some kind of inexpressible *pleasure* instantly spiritualizing the entire human physical organism and communicating to it an infinite plenitude of the blissful *spiritual ecstasy* of life. ...It is an *unconscious, mysterious* fact of our spiritual nature. It can be evoked in us by the distant sounds of a street-organ or the gusts of autumn wind, and by a sight of a simple flower--in a word, there is no such ordinary phenomenon which would not evoke a poetic sensation in the richly gifted nature of man--that sudden, slow *ecstasy of the soul* that resounds throughout our body in the form of the *most intimate satisfaction.* (Botkin 203-204)

We have italicized the key words of the definition above in order to emphasize its connection with the text of "Albert." As a matter of fact, there are several passages in the story that make it impossible to deny the fact that Tolstoy used some of the central premises of the article as the basis for the development of the plot. There is a remarkable scene in the final chapter of the story where Albert experiences the ultimate catharsis through music during his semiconscious journey. It is remarkable for the fact that Tolstoy finds a perfect descriptive metaphor to express what Botkin's calls "the ecstasy of the soul" and "the spiritual rapture of life." In his dreamlike state Albert sees himself from the distance playing the violin, but it is not the ordinary instrument--his violin is made of glass and is capable of producing the most delicate and delightful sounds. And there is one more peculiarity to the instrument: one must press it against the chest in order to produce sounds. In the way the scene is constructed, the reader receives a full impression that the music Albert plays is pouring directly out of his soul via the magical instrument, the crystal violin being a magnificent metaphor for the

fragile music of the human soul. Let us take a closer look at the excerpt to fully appreciate Tolstoy's mastery of language in this episode:

> ...Albert himself stood on the platform and played on the violin all that the voice had said before. But the violin was of strange construction; it was made of glass and it had to be held in both hands and slowly pressed to the breast to make it produce sounds. The sounds were the most delicate and delightful Albert had ever heard. The closer he pressed the violin to his breast the more joyful and tender he felt. The louder the sounds grew the faster the shadows dispersed and the brighter the walls of the hall were lit up by transparent light. But it was necessary to play the violin very warily so as not to break it. He played the glass instrument very carefully and well. He played such things as he felt no one would ever hear again. (*PSS* 5: 51)

Another episode that opens chapter three deals with the complexity of emotions stirred up by Albert's music, and also echoes closely Botkin's thoughts about the mysterious and unconscious nature of inspiration. All the guests experienced an epiphany-like state during Albert's performance; they all felt transported out of the realm of the ordinary into some higher spiritual spheres, but no one, including the author, is capable of explaining the nature and origin of the sensations experienced by them; moreover, they feel threatened by the inexplicable intensity of the emotions and their inability to fully cross over to those spheres:

> Something strange occurred with everyone present and something strange was felt in the dead silence that followed Albert's playing. It was as if each would have liked to express what all this meant, but was unable to do so. What did it mean--this bright hot room, brilliant women, the dawn in the windows, excitement in the blood, and the pure impression left by sounds that had flowed past? But no one even tried to say what it all meant: on the contrary everyone, unable to dwell in those regions which the new impression had revealed to them, rebelled against it. (*PSS* 5: 32-33)

In connection with the third version of the story it is worth mentioning that the question about one's attitude towards art in general is complicated here by the moral problem about the right of any person to infringe on the inner world of another. This is an important issue for Tolstoy in the light of his strong propensity towards

"moral art," one which had manifested itself already in earlier works of his such as *The Sebastopol Stories* and his autobiographical trilogy. It is rather significant that even at the time of Tolstoy's closest relations with the aesthetes and his serious preoccupation with problems of art, moral questions never lose their importance for his literary work. We find confirmation of that on the pages of Tolstoy's diary from 1856 where he is trying to arrive at a definition of "moral art," an art that brings to the forefront not political and social problems but rather the problems of universal human morality.

We focus on the third version of the text since the moral issue is much more overtly stated and developed here compared to the main version. Tolstoy openly puts Albert on trial before the high-society guests invited by Delesov to his *soirée*. While the host himself stays neutral and tries to play the role of a mediator in the discussion, all of his guests with the exception of the painter Biriuzovskii, deliver a harsh verdict on Albert for what they consider his parasitic existence. One of the most prominent guests, Alenin, the recognized music critic, judges Albert based on his personal system of values that excludes the presence of an altruistic attitude to life. Just like Delesov in his attempt to save the musician from his marginal existence he cannot even conceive that Albert already has his own well-adjusted inner world where he feels happy. Tolstoy clearly emphasizes that Alenin's and Delesov's understanding of reality is simply incompatible with Albert's, since what for some people is reality, for Albert is nothing more but a "vulgar dream." Albert feels like a captive in Delesov's apartment and the author notes that he has "suffered in these three days more than in the course of his whole life" (*PSS* 5: 151). Albert is afraid of the horrible reality that is being imposed

on him as it destroys his inner world. Delesov's charity forcefully tore Albert out of his own world where he was happy and rose to his full stature and transported him to a world where he felt worthless, wretched and petty. Albert lives in another dimension inaccessible to others, a world filled with music, dreams and memories that set him free from the constricting demands of everyday reality. Delesov, on the other hand, is a man of convention; he possesses that certain air of cold complacency which belongs to a person who has comfortably and elegantly arranged his life but has not found happiness and fulfillment. It is no surprise that Albert is frightened by Delesov's world of high-society rituals--for him it is just an "incomprehensible abyss of reality" (*PSS* 5: 151). Albert, in his turn, marvels at the absurdity of Delesov's cold, loveless life, a life that leads to spiritual devastation and boredom. Perhaps that is why despite his formal censure of Albert's degraded way of life, Delesov feels a strong attraction to the musician from their first meeting. During their midnight conversations they establish a close connection that runs beyond any class or cultural differences but is based on the kindred spirit of their souls: "Delesov looked at Albert, not taking his eyes off him. Occasionally Albert smiled, and so did Delesov. They were both silent; but their looks and smiles created more and more affectionate relations between them. Delesov felt himself growing fonder of the man, and experienced an incomprehensible joy" (*PSS* 5: 40). He loves Albert not only for the joy of those blissful memories that he is able to evoke with his music, but most of all for the joy of those simple human emotions that Albert aroused in him: "He vividly recalled the first two evenings he had spent with the musician, and recalled the last sad days which by his fault Albert had spent there, and

above all he recalled that sweet, mixed feeling of surprise, affection and pity, which that strange man had aroused in him at first sight, and he felt sorry for him" (*PSS* 5: 47). In his presumptuous attempt to correct Albert, Delesov received a gift from the musician unexpectedly for himself in the form of rediscovered human qualities such as compassion and unconditional love for another human being that had been dormant in him for most of his life.

It is noteworthy that Tolstoy's characters try to solve the problem of moral self-improvement even on the pages of a story that allegedly preoccupies itself solely with aesthetic problems. At one point in the story Delesov starts to experience doubts about his ability to change Albert's life for the better and questions his own ability to manage his personal life: "How can I improve others, when God knows whether I can manage myself?" (*PSS* 5: 46). In the third version Tolstoy provides us with a rather detailed description not only of Delesov's appearance but also of his present life and a glimpse into his youthful years. Tolstoy chose to omit this chapter in the final version (which in itself is indicative), but it is very helpful to us in terms of our understanding of the character's inner life and the motive forces behind his actions. What is implied about Delesov in the main version in the form of passing remarks and subtle hints that the reader finds between the lines, in the third version is stated straightforwardly and boldly. There is an interesting sentence in the second chapter of the printed version that describes one of the guests during Albert's playing as follows: "One of the visitors who had drunk more than the others lay prone on the sofa, trying not to move for fear of betraying his agitation." In the third redaction, however. the weeping man on the couch

is Delesov and Tolstoy is eager to tell us why he is crying. He is weeping from a sense of inner discord and unfulfilled potential that torments him every minute of the day. He is dissatisfied and almost unbearably disgusted by his own life and feels an acute need for change and self-improvement. He is remorseful for his inability to love anyone, despite his natural good heartedness. Thus Delesov's strong personal connection with Albert is established at the moment when Albert's music reminds him of the "time when Delesov was young, good looking, when he loved others and expected from himself something extraordinarily wonderful" (*PSS* 5: 146). It is instructive that Tolstoy does not limit the powers of music only to the hedonistic realm here, but most importantly gives it the role of a moral trigger that is capable of leading a person onto a path of spiritual purification and self-improvement. This certainly was in accordance with the evolving principles of "moral art."

Our textual analysis would not be complete without a look at the closing episode of the story. Without a doubt in this highly symbolic and artistically charged ending Tolstoy pays tribute to the aesthetic movement. The way Tolstoy constructs the final scene is rather remarkable, as if he is playing with the senses of the reader as well as his main character, moving in and out of Albert's consciousness and the surrounding reality. In general, the question of reality is raised numerous times throughout the work in connection with Albert and the other characters and is important in terms of its definition. As we know Albert feels threatened by the reality imposed on him by Delesov because it encroaches upon his inner world and brings discord into his existence. Albert feels incapable of coping with the demands of the real world and

creates his own alternative inner world where dreams, memories and music are tightly interwoven into his fabric of consciousness and become more real to him than the world around him. On his way to Anna Ivanovna's house Albert falls into a hallucinating dream-like state through which he relives some of his old memories. Here is how Tolstoy describes his experiences: "Despite their incoherence all these memories presented themselves so clearly to his mind that, closing his eyes, he did not know which was the more real: what he was doing, or what he was thinking. ...He realized and felt only the things that, intermingling and fantastically following one another, rose in his imagination" (*PSS* 5: 48). At the very end of Chapter VII when Albert is finally reunited with the woman he loves if only in his imagination, we read the following: "He embraced her and felt unutterable happiness. 'Is this not a dream?' he asked himself. But no! It was more than reality: it was reality and recollection combined. Then he felt that the unutterable bliss he had at that moment enjoyed had passed and would never return" (*PSS* 5: 52). Unfortunately, Albert's reality is in conflict with reality as understood by the representatives of high society who presumptuously consider their outlook on life to be the ultimate truth and deny Albert the right to have his own understanding of reality so suitable for him but so different from theirs. Once more Tolstoy's thoughts about the fragility and undisputable value of the human individual and his inner world closely echo Botkins's spirited defense of a person's right for self-expression. Like Tolstoy, in his essay Botkin defends the poet against the encroachments of contemporary relevance:

> Previous to all the demands of present-day reality there exists the personal I, this heart,

> this man who has an inalienable right to be himself, that is to feel and think without reckoning with the fleeting demands of contemporary reality.... The expression of the individual, intimate life of a person always has a powerful and enchanting influence on us. The inner individuality of every person despite its seeming formal resemblance to others, is in its own way the most various and original world filled for us with the keenest interest. (215)

The final pages of the story are extremely emotionally charged; the reader finds himself guessing about the meaning of Albert's mysterious visions that are so surreal that they resemble opera stage sets. They contain both exalted and ominous connotations and are filled with symbolic imagery. Albert is finally reunited with the one he loves and experiences heavenly bliss from their embrace, yet his beloved's face is sad and there is a strong sense of discord in the whole scene. Tolstoy creates an impression that life and death intermingle and merge together in a complex metamorphosis represented by two interpenetrating natural elements--the moon and the water:

> At the threshold of the hall Albert saw the moon and some water. But the water was not below as it usually is, nor was the moon a white circle in one place up above as it usually is. Moon and water were together and everywhere--above, below, at the sides, and all around them both. Albert threw himself with her into the moon and the water, and realized that he could now embrace her, whom he loved more than anything in the world. He embraced her and felt unutterable happiness. ...'What am I weeping for?' he asked her. She looked at him silently and sadly. Albert understood what she meant by that. 'But how can it be, since I am alive?' he muttered. Without replying or moving she looked straight before her. 'This is terrible! How can I explain to her that I am alive?' he thought with horror. (*PSS* 5: 52)

The complexity of this scene elicits a wide spectrum of emotions in the reader and can be interpreted in a number of different ways. However, it certainly evokes some parallels with the ritual of baptism and can be explained in terms of Albert's initiation into death. When Albert plunges into the water he is purged of his sufferings and reaches the pinnacle of happiness but it is impossible for him to retain it in the

present life as he is in conflict with its reality. So Albert has to transcend into another world in order to gain his freedom and happiness, as he cannot find a place for himself in this life. What is extremely important here is the sense of discord and the feeling that the world is out of joint, further complicated by strong overtones of social criticism that Tolstoy also tries to bring out into prominence in this closing scene. When Albert is finally discovered unconscious, freezing on the threshold of Anna Ivanovna's house, the only response she can muster to one of her guests' remarks about the inhumanity of the situation is an exclamation of frustration: "Ah, that Albert! I'm sick to death of him! Annushka, lay him down somewhere in a room" (*PSS* 5: 52). This casual phrase lays bare the true attitude of those people towards the artist--Albert is nothing more but a source of pleasure and entertainment for them, a sort of jester, and as soon as he ceases to provide amusement, he is discarded like a used-up thing. The feelings of compassion and love that Albert managed to evoke in them with his music just a few days before, unfortunately, were too fleeting and short-lived. Besides, along with the inexpressible joy, they brought a bitter sense of dissatisfaction with their present life and reminded them of wasted opportunities that could never be recovered. At this point it is helpful to turn one more time to the third redaction of the story for additional help with the interpretation of this final episode, since Tolstoy is considerably more overt in his creative intentions in the earlier version which thus provides us with an invaluable key to some of its very complex scenes.

In the draft version the theme of death and Albert's dissonance with life are very dominant, in fact, Albert summons death in order to escape the overwhelming pressure

of reality. After Anna Ivanovna turns him away because she is entertaining a prominent guest that night who would not have been pleased to see a wretched musician, Albert decides to spend the night in the stables of a familiar house. As Albert starts to drift away to sleep, a fanciful, intermingling train of memories and dreams flashes before him: he sees a stage set of the Petersburg opera decorated as an Italian villa at night and imagines himself with his beloved on the seashores of Italy with the moon casting its light over the water. They are infinitely happy and Albert hears a divine serenade of *Don Giovanni* playing in his mind. But the idyll is suddenly broken with a horrible chord and the intrusion of armed people in red capes who have come to take his beloved away. Albert drifts in and out of consciousness and the sound of passing carriages outside evokes the most delightful melodies in the musician's mind. This episode is wonderfully suggestive of the later scene in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* where Petya Rostov falls asleep before his first battle to the sounds of steel ringing, produced by the sharpening of his sword. He experiences sensations similar to Albert's as he balances on the edge of dream and reality. This twilight zone of consciousness where his characters are transported by the sounds of music or simple everyday objects becomes a hallmark of the mature Tolstoy, but we can already see how the author is working out the mechanics of this device in his early tales.

The tender and beautiful melodies that Albert hears in his mind gradually start to acquire somber overtones and turn into a harmoniously slow burial service sung by a male choir. The ominous image of the moon that was so mysterious and problematic in the final version, here quite clearly symbolizes the coming of death, however a death

which is not so much menacing as it is desired by Albert:

> Death!--he thought; It is coming closer with its quiet, measured steps and everything, everything fades away, all joys disappear and in place of many petty joys there opens something whole, shining and enormous. There, there. I need to hurry there. How much one needs to remember and do here, how many things one needs to know and I do not know anything. ...There is not and there may not be here the happiness that I can endure and I know--no one has such happiness. And a little bit less or a little bit more of it, is it not all the same. It is all for such a short time. (*PSS* 5: 165)

In this alternative ending Tolstoy provides a closer look at Albert's afflictions, as the artist is given an opportunity to voice his judgment on a reality that is out of sync with the most essential desires of human soul. Tolstoy closes the circle of the narration with a thought that was expressed in the opening paragraph of the story in connection with quite another character, Delesov, who experienced deep dissatisfaction and discord with himself and the others in the midst of the high-society party and "felt that it was all unnecessary and was not the thing (was all wrong)" (*PSS* 5: 27). Albert in his visions repeats this sentiment literally, as if entering once more into the conversation with his aristocratic antagonist but this time arriving at an agreement with him about the lack of harmony and simple human happiness in the world around them: "Something is wrong in this world, not the thing at all, not what it should be" (*PSS* 5: 165). Albert does not resist death, on the contrary, he is ready to accept it as a promise of peace and eternal love, but Tolstoy spares his character and unexpectedly casts the artist into a "sweet and quiet sleep": "He did not think any more or feel anything. It was not death, but a sweet and quiet sleep that brought him for a while the best bliss in the world--total oblivion" (*PSS* 5: 165). And as if to emphasize that Albert represents the human sensual side, the sphere of the senses rather than consciousness, Tolstoy crosses

out the words "total oblivion" and writes on the margins of the draft "annihilation of consciousness" (*PSS* 5: 165).

Tolstoy's preoccupation with the aesthetic ideas of the 1850s left an important mark on his formative stage as a writer and became a springboard for his future aesthetic and ethical searching. He would carry this experience throughout his literary career, reworking and reshaping it in an attempt to find an artistic form for his works consistent with the expression of his moral ideas. Eventually, forty years later, it would crystallize in his influential treatise on art where Tolstoy will arrive at the conclusion that the aesthetic value of a work of art is not independent of its moral content.

However, even at the period of the closest engagement of Tolstoy with the leaders of the Russian aesthetic movement, he does not become a blind follower of the trend but instead is trying to interpret his experience of them and to choose his own literary path, which is located at the crossroads of various literary schools. We can say that throughout the 50s Tolstoy struggles to defend an ideal of being responsive to social and political changes in society but at the same time remaining independent as a writer. There is also strong evidence in Tolstoy's correspondence and diaries from the period that towards the end of the decade Tolstoy slowly started to lose confidence in the authority of his "invaluable triumvirate" and the postulates of the pure-art theory--their "intellectual conversations" by Tolstoy's own confession become irksome for him and in one of his diary entries we read regarding Druzhinin's response to Chernyshevsky's cycle of essays: "I read Druzhinin's second article. His weakness lies in the fact that he never has the slightest inkling that it all may be total rubbish" (*PSS* 47: 104). Tolstoy's

personal interests were much too wide in scope to fit in the narrow constraints of any one literary movement. By the end of the 50s Tolstoy has outgrown his literary mentors and started to feel the limitations of the aesthetic theory, one which could not help him find answers to the philosophical, moral and ethical questions that deeply concerned him during that period so naturally their paths gradually started to diverge.

In Soviet criticism the period from 1857 to 1859 in Tolstoy's literary career was traditionally regarded as unsuccessful because it was lacking in socially important themes. The general consensus was that the works written during Tolstoy's infatuation with the ideas of pure-art theory beginning with *Youth* and concluding with *Family Happiness* marked a noticeable decline in Tolstoy's creative work. It was believed that the author turned away from the vital national problems raised in earlier works such as *The Sebastopol Stories, Two Hussars, Morning of the Landlord,* and focused his attention on subjective emotional experiences and secondary problems that had importance only for a narrow circle of literary intellectuals. This is a highly doubtful opinion, especially in the light of the fact that in the midst of this period Tolstoy is already working on his novel *The Cossacks* where he is trying to establish new principles of epic and historical methods of narration. We find the following entry in Tolstoy's diary from March 20, 1858 in connection with his work on the novel: "For some time now every question for me acquires immense proportions... Now with each new subject and circumstance besides the conditions of the subject itself and the circumstance, I involuntarily search for its place in the eternal and infinite--in history" (*PSS* 46: 79). During his work on *The Cossacks,* Tolstoy was searching especially painstakingly for

the right tone for the narration. He was evidently striving to overcome the limitations of the refined psychological depiction in which he had already proven his indisputable primacy, and to develop a more objective epic style of portrayal. In a letter to Annenkov written in April of 1857 Tolstoy explained his creative concept in the following way:

> The point is that this subjective poetry of sincerity is the inquiring kind of poetry, and it has become a little loathsome to me, besides it fits neither the task nor my present mood. I set off for the boundless, firm, positive and objective sphere and was flabbergasted first of all by the abundance of subjects or rather different sides of subjects that opened before me and by the variety of tones in which these subjects can be presented. It seems to me that there is stirring in this chaos a vague rule by which I will be able to make my choice... (*Perepiska s russkimi pisateliami* 1: 308).

It is characteristic that in August of 1857 Tolstoy avidly read Homer's *Iliad* which directly influenced the conception of *Cossacks*. Despite the charges of Chernyshevsky and some later Soviet critics, who believed that the reactionary ideas of the pure-art theory had a pernicious effect upon Tolstoy's creative work, we remember that it was none other than Botkin who awoke in Tolstoy an admiration for what was seen as this great creation of the folk epos of antiquity, and it was upon his recommendation that Tolstoy immersed himself in reading the *Iliad* at this point. Moreover, Botkin not only guides Tolstoy's reading but also encourages him to continue his work on the new novel, with whose opening Botkin had apparently been acquainted, as becomes evident from the following excerpt of a letter written to Tolstoy on June 17, 1857: "Certainly continue the novel that you have begun writing so magnificently, for God's sake, do not grow cold towards it" (*Perepiska s russkimi pisateliami* 1: 217). Throughout August of 1857 Tolstoy makes several entries in his diary regarding his

work on *The Cossacks* and the reading of the *Iliad* that stimulates him to rethink and rewrite some parts of his novel. It is obvious that Tolstoy's creative consciousness has already conceived a striving for an epic style of narration which just needed the impulse that the reading of the ancient epic provided to come to fruition. So it would be groundless to reproach Tolstoy for his seeming alienation from the socio-political scene of the late 50s and his supposedly sole preoccupation with purely aesthetic ideas in art, as it is precisely in the midst of this period that Tolstoy is also intensively searching for new ways of expression and is trying to develop new principles of epic and historical narration that will eventually become his one of his most defining qualities as a novelist. On the contrary, Tolstoy's gravitation towards a broadly epic portrayal and epic in general, whose narration is primarily concerned with the national idea, can be regarded as strong evidence of the writer's acute interest and personal involvement in contemporary political events; it was especially appropriate at the times when the question of emancipation of serfs had been raised by the society with exceptional urgency.

Notes from Lucerne – an experiment in literary journalism

Speaking about Tolstoy's creative experiments of the 1850's, we cannot disregard another emblematic work from this period, *Notes from Lucerne,* whose conception had interrupted Tolstoy's prolonged work on *Albert* and which in contrast to it was written freely and with great enthusiasm. The story grew out of Tolstoy's impressions during his European voyage of 1857 and became a sort of summary of the reflections triggered by the encounters and experiences of his trip. The episode that

marked the conception of *Lucerne* actually happened to Tolstoy during his travels in Switzerland and was described in his diary from July 7, 1857 in the following way:

> Woke up at 9, went for a walk to the boarding house and to the monument of the Lion. At home opened a notebook but could not write anything. Gave up *The Hunting Ground.* The dinner was obtusely dull. Went to the Privathaus. Coming back from there at night—overcast--the moon is breaking through, there can be heard several nice voices, two bell towers in the wide street, a tiny person is singing Tyrolean songs with a guitar and excellently. I gave him some money and invited him to sing across from the Schweizerhof Hotel but nothing; he bashfully started walking away mumbling something, the crowd followed him laughing. But before the crowed was silent and they crowded on the balcony. I caught up with him and invited him to go drinking at the Schweizerhof. We were taken to the other hall. The artist is a vulgar fellow but moving. We drank, the servant started laughing and the hall porter sat down. It enraged me--I cursed them out and became awfully agitated. The night is a marvel. What I want, what am I longing for--I do not know, only not the comforts of this world. And how not to believe in the immortality of the soul when you feel inside such immeasurable grandeur? I looked out of the window. Pitch black, torn up clouds and bright. Just fall down and die.--My God! My God! What am I? And where shall I go? And where am I? (*PSS* 47: 140)

Tolstoy was looking for an outlet for the lyrical agitation that seized him so powerfully, and besides, the feelings and thoughts accumulated during his foreign travels required expression. This accidental meeting with a singer on the quay in front of the hotel gives Tolstoy the necessary creative stimulus and at the same time becomes the nucleus around which the emotional experiences of the young writer crystallized. This time the creative process proceeded with unusual swiftness--the story was written in three days and Tolstoy was uncommonly satisfied with the result. On July 11 he noted in his diary: "Finished *Lucerne* before noon. Good. I need to be bold, otherwise can't say anything but what is graceful, and I need to say a lot of what is new and sensible" (*PSS* 47: 142). It is noteworthy that Tolstoy hesitated in the choice of genre for *Lucerne* as frequently happened with works where he intended to address the reader directly and express his authorial position overtly. As we can see from his

diaries, Tolstoy at the period of writing *Lucerne* was especially concerned with the problem of morality in art evoked by the complex and conflicting experiences of his European voyage. It is remarkable that early on in his literary career and even during his closest association with the ideas of the aesthetic movement, Tolstoy also strives to establish an independent literary voice in which we can already hear a presentiment of his future ethical teaching. Tolstoy's original natural propensity towards "moral art" rather than "pure art" engenders his frequent vacillation between the fictional and journalistic genres, thus already as a beginning writer Tolstoy is trying to solve the problem of the artistic representation of his philosophical thought.

Initially the story was intended to be written in the form of a letter to an imaginary addressee who was none other than Vasilii Petrovich Botkin whose literary tastes Tolstoy in many ways shared and especially trusted at that period, as we have seen. It is obvious from Tolstoy's letter that he felt a powerful urge to express his ideas on paper, as he confessed to Botkin that the incident with the beggar-singer had made such a strong impression on him and had become so deeply lodged in his imagination that the only way to get rid of it was to find its expression in words. On July 9, the day that Tolstoy started *Lucerne*, he also was writing to Botkin with the following thoughts:

> I am terribly preoccupied; the work--fruitless or not I don't know, is at full swing and I cannot restrain myself from telling you at least a small part of what I would have wanted to discuss with you. First of all, I have already told you that so many things abroad had struck me as so strange and new that I jotted down something in order to be able to restore it when I have the time. If you approve, then allow me to write it in the form of letters to you. You know my conviction about the necessity of an imaginary reader. You are my favorite imaginary reader. Writing to you is as easy for me as thinking; I know that my every thought, my every impression are received by you in a more pure, clear and elevated way than they can be expressed by me. I know that the writer's conditions are different but forget about them--I am not a writer. I want only one thing when I am writing, that is that another person, a person who shares my

> heartfelt thoughts, should rejoice together with me or feel anger over what angers me, or shed the same kind of tears that I am shedding. I don't know the need to say something to the whole world but I know the anguish of lonely enjoyment of weeping, suffering. As an example of future letters I am sending you this one from the 7th of July from Lucerne. (*Perepiska s russkimi pisateliami* 1: 219-220)

As work on *Lucerne* progressed, Tolstoy rejected the idea of the epistolary genre for the story and instead chose the form of a journal as indicated in the title *From Prince Nekhliudov's Memoirs*, as if he were trying to break with literary convention and at the same time intended only to slightly develop the initial note in his own diary. At one point in another letter to Botkin Tolstoy even calls his story an article, which clearly suggests his personal preference for a nonfictional type of composition for the expression of his civic position: "I started immediately writing down the Lucerne experience. It turned into a sort of an article which I have finished and I am almost pleased with it and would wish to read it to you but it looks like the chances for that are slim" (*Perepiska* 1: 222). *Lucerne* undoubtedly represents a confluence of journalistic and fictional genres very characteristic of Tolstoy's style. It can be regarded as one of the best examples of a kind of passionate and influential literary journalism which combined bold fictional scenes with awe-inspiring Swiss landscapes. Tolstoy's indignation practically overflows the pages; the reader fully experiences the undeniable force of Tolstoyan criticism and a civic temperament that fiercely attacks social injustice, human callousness and egotism. The author sweeps away all the resourceful apologies of reason and exposes the pettiness and banality of bourgeois existence as well as the social inequality that is being masked by the high ideals of the Republic. And if earlier in *Childhood* the criterion of truth against which the social

behavior of man was judged had been the child's naive and uncorrupted consciousness, then in *Lucerne* this criterion is nature and the consciousness of a man who is close to nature and almost merges with it. Tolstoy's outlook here echoes closely certain concepts of Rousseau with whose ideas Tolstoy became captivated earlier during his work on *Childhood;* this becomes especially evident in those passages of *Lucerne* where Tolstoy arrives at the rejection of progress and civilization in favor of the "instinctive, loving association of people" and the "simple elemental feeling of humanity." Let us take a closer look at the passage where Tolstoy directly addresses the reader by raising challenging questions concerning the moral and ethical problems of human existence in connection with the incident involving the beggar-singer who was mistreated by the rich crowd in front of the Hotel Schweizerhof. This passage also presents considerable interest to us from the point of view of the rhetorical devices employed by the author for the persuasive expression of his civic indignation:

> *Why is this inhuman occurrence*, which would be *impossible* in any German, French, or Italian village, *possible* here where civilization, liberty, and equality have been brought to the highest point, and where the most civilized travelers from the most civilized nations congregate? *Why have these developed, humane people*, who collectively are capable *of* any honorable and humane action, *no human, cordial inclination* to perform a kindly personal action? *Why do these people*--who in their parliaments, meetings, and societies are *warmly concerned* about the condition of the celibate Chinese in India, about propagating Christianity and education in Africa, about the establishment of societies for the betterment of the whole human race--*not find in their souls the simple elemental feeling of human sympathy*? *Is it possible* that they do not possess that feeling, and that its place has been occupied by the vanity, ambition, and cupidity governing these men in their parliaments, meetings, and societies? *Can it be* that the spread of the sensible and *selfish association of men* called civilization, destroys and contradicts the need for *instinctive, loving association*? And *is it possible* that this is the equality for which so much innocent blood has been shed and so many crimes committed? *Is it possible* that nations, like children, can be made happy by the mere sound of the word equality? (*PSS* 5: 23-24)

If we look at the above passage closely we will see that it is comprised of seven lengthy interrogative sentences and basically has a form of one long rhetorical question. This excerpt has a strongly pronounced declamatory tone typical of a sermon. The rhetorical devices employed by Tolstoy for the construction of the episode are very characteristic of oratorical speech with its building intensity of inflection, constant broad juxtapositions and antitheses, use of rhetorical questions and emotional repetitions. This scheme recurs every time that Tolstoy resorts to authorial digressions for the expression of his moral and civic position, thus the author develops an independent voice in the narration that allows him not only to stand outside of his characters but also separates him from the voice of the storyteller. The result is a narrative with a complex structure in which every voice has its specific function and the narrator's voice is not necessarily identical with the authorial position or role.

Boris Eikhenbaum,in his seminal study *The Young Tolstoy,* discusses this peculiarity of Tolstoy's style in connection with *The Sebastopol Stories.* He analyses and compares two passages from the second Sebastopol sketch *Sebastopol in May 1855* for the presence of characteristic rhetorical devices that give Tolstoy's authorial digressions such strong oratorical, almost sermon-like qualities. Eikhenbaum also mentions the important fact that in 1851 Tolstoy specifically engaged in writing sermons, which proves not only Tolstoy's deep interest in ecclesiastical questions at the time but, what is more important, his deliberate effort to master and develop the effective oratorical devices that would help him to construct persuasive and eloquent arguments in his literary works. Eikhenbaum writes:

> In narrative prose the principal tone is set by a storyteller who in himself represents the focal point of the work. Tolstoy always stands outside of his characters, and therefore he needs a medium whose perception can provide a basis for description. This necessary form is created only gradually. Tolstoy's own tone has a constant tendency to develop apart from the described scenes, to hover over them in the form of generalizations, precepts, sermons almost. These sermons often assume the characteristic declamatory form, with its typical rhetorical devices. Thus begins the second Sevastopol sketch. This is the typical speech of an orator or preacher, with its rising intonation, emotional repetitions, and phrases of a broad declamatory style designed for a large crowd of listeners. This tone runs through the entire piece, returning in the accented portions of the sketch. Thus Chapter XIV, which separates the first day from the second, is written entirely in this style, with the very same devices. The scheme of both "sermons" is identical: `thousands... thousands... and still the same... and still the same... hundreds... hundreds... but still in the same way as on previous days ... and still in the same way as on previous days' Such sweeping antitheses as the following are also extremely characteristic of oratorical devices: 'thousands ... have had time to be *offended*, thousands have had time to be *gratified*, or 'hundreds of bodies, full of various *lofty and petty* hopes and desires ... hundreds of people with *curses and prayers.'* The conclusion is written in the same way, and in combination with the quoted excerpts forms a complete sermon. (Eikhenbaum, *The Young Tolstoy* 103-104)

There is a two-year gap between *The Sevastopol Sketches* and *Lucerne*, yet it is remarkable to see the striking stylistic similarity between the passages examined above. We can clearly witness a developing continuity in the stylistic and compositional devices that will eventually become a hallmark of a later Tolstoyan style. Yet in *Lucerne* some of the most memorable pages of the story are dedicated to nature descriptions that are not a merely picturesque backdrop for the unfolding narration but rather an important framing compositional device, one that also incorporates the main philosophical argument and serves as a prelude preparing the reader for further discussion in the form of authorial digressions. A good example of such an exposition is the opening description of the lake and the mountains surrounding it that is presented to us through the eyes of the Russian traveler Prince Nekhliudov who is deeply overcome by the spectacle of the majestic grandeur and harmony of the view that opens to him from his hotel window:

> The lake, light-blue like burning sulfur, and dotted with little boats which left vanishing tracks behind them, spread out before my windows motionless, smooth, and apparently convex between its variegated green shores, then passed into the distance where it narrowed between two enormous promontories, and, darkening, leaned against and disappeared among the pile of mountains, clouds, and glaciers, that towered one above the other. In the foreground were the moist, fresh-green, far-stretching shores with their reeds, meadows, gardens, and chalets; further off were dark-green wooded promontories crowned by ruined castles; in the background was the rugged, purple-white distance with its fantastic, rocky, dull-white, snow-covered mountain crests, the whole bathed in the delicate, transparent azure of the air and lit up by warm sunset rays that pierced the torn clouds. Neither on the lake nor on the mountains, nor in the sky, was there a single precise line, or one precise color, or one unchanging moment: everywhere was motion, irregularity, fantastic shapes, an endless intermingling and variety of shades and lines, and over it all lay tranquility, softness, unity, and inevitable beauty. And here, before my very window, amid this undefined, confused, unfettered beauty, the straight white line of the quay stretched stupidly and artificially, with its lime trees, their supports, and the green benches--miserable, vulgar human productions which did not blend with the general harmony and beauty as did the distant chalets and ruins, but on the contrary clashed crudely with it. (*PSS* 5: 4)

The attention of the reader is immediately drawn to the painting-like qualities of this description. With the broad strokes of an impressionist painter Tolstoy puts down a layer after layer, masterfully mixing the paints in his palette to create a sublime, almost ineffable impression of natural beauty based on the play of shade and light and the interaction of epithets belonging to different semantic fields of the language. Depth and perspective are created by such expressions as "spread out before my windows," "passed into the distance," "narrowed between," "leaned against and disappeared among," "far-stretching shores"--all of them drawing the reader into the landscape creating the sense of real spatial presence in it. The landscape is bathing in reflected light and permeated with different shades of color that give it fluidity and softness. The author uses at least seven adjectives of color ranging from light-blue, fresh-green to purple-white and azure to convey to the reader the inexhaustible richness of Nature's palette and its ever changing metamorphosis. Tolstoy achieves extraordinary vividness

by evoking subjective and sensory impressions with the interplay of color, light and shade. However, there are two levels in this description and suddenly we experience an abrupt change of tonality and a sharp juxtaposition that are often used by Tolstoy as a building block for the construction of his arguments. The "undefined, confused and unfettered beauty" of Nature is contrasted with the artificiality and poverty of the man-made creations that clash crudely with the natural harmony. The shades of color, curves and fantastic shapes disappear from the landscape and in the description of the quay the dominant theme becomes its linear straightness. The focal verbal expression that defines the embankment is "to stick out" [*torchat'*] which emphasizes the rigid unnatural symmetry of the construction that does not blend with the chaotic irregular beauty of the surroundings; in the Russian original this feature is especially prominent as one of the epithets used in the description of the quay is the noun "*palka*" [stick]: "pered samym moim oknom, glupo, fokusno torchala belaia palka naberezhnoi." Everything in this part of the description including the pathetic lime trees with their supports that indicate an attempt to make them grow straight upright and green benches that do not blend in the environment despite their color, evoke in the reader the feeling of stark dissonance with the natural harmony created by the author in the first paragraph.

In *Lucerne* Tolstoy raises a wide spectrum of social, political and moral issues ranging from social inequality masked by Republican ideals, the banality of bourgeois existence, human callousness and disrespect for the artist, lack of elementary feelings of Christian compassion, but none does he attack with more vigor than human indifference towards the surrounding world and a parallel lack of interest in social intercourse. In

this regard Tolstoy applies a device similar to the passage examined above that yields a familiar pattern: an observation followed by a detailed description that is summarized in a rhetorical question succeeded by a comparative contraposition. This rhetorical device serves not only as an effective persuasion mechanism that helps the author to win the readers' sympathy but also due to its repetitiveness, helps to establish a certain rhythmic flow of narration that is so characteristic of Tolstoy's prose; it also plays an important compositional role helping to structure and frame the narrative. The description of dinner at the hotel that is presented to us through the eyes of the narrator will serve as an excellent example of Tolstoy's favorite mode of argumentation.

The passage opens with the sentence: "At half-past seven I was called to dinner." It is followed by a detailed depiction of the ritual gathering of the guests, complete with the description of the women's evening dresses, the men's immaculate attire and even the sounds produced by the rustling of dresses, footsteps and whispering. Then our attention is invited by the following observation: "As usual in Switzerland the majority of the visitors were English, and therefore the chief characteristic of the common table was the strict decorum they regard as an obligation--a reserve not based on pride, but on the absence of any necessity for social intercourse, and on being content with the comfortable and agreeable satisfaction of their requirements. ...But the faces, many of them very handsome, expressed only a consciousness of their own well-being and a complete lack of interest in all that surrounded them unless it directly concerned themselves..." (*PSS* 5: 5). The two problems are stated directly to the reader: "the

absence of necessity for social intercourse" and "a complete lack of interest in all that surrounded them," after which the author continues to build his argument, skillfully intermingling the description of the guests' behavior at the table with the minute details of their eating habits, the movements of their hands and their rare conversational exchanges interspersed with the authoritative statements of his narrator who acts as a reliable spokesman for the author himself. We read statements of the type: "At such dinners I always feel depressed, uncomfortable, and at last melancholy. I always feel as if I were guilty of something and am being punished, as I used to be when, as a child, I was put in a chair when I had been naughty, and ironically told: 'Rest yourself, my dear!' while the youthful blood surged in my veins and I heard the merry shouts of my brothers in the next room" (*PSS* 5: 5); or else, "Formerly I tried to rebel against the feeling of oppression I experienced during such dinners, but in vain: all those inanimate countenances have an insuperable effect on me and I become similarly inanimate myself. I wish nothing, think nothing, and cease even to observe what is going on" (*PSS* 5: 6). All this serves as a catalyst for shaping the reader's opinion helping the author to channel the reader's perception of the problem under discussion in the desired direction. Tolstoy closes the paragraph with the following rhetorical question which has already been prepared by the directed flow of the developed argument and only naturally summarizes and highlights it: "Then why do they deprive themselves of one of life's greatest pleasures--the enjoyment that comes from the social intercourse of man with man?" (*PSS* 5: 6). And immediately the rhetorical question is succeeded by a comparative contraposition--the final persuasive

element that clearly indicates where the author's sympathy resides and strongly encourages the reader to share it:

> How different it was in our Paris pension, where some twenty of us, of various nationalities, professions, and dispositions, under the influence of French sociability used to meet at the common table as at a game! There, from one end of the table to the other, conversation, interspersed with jests and puns, even if in broken language, at once became general. ...There immediately after dinner we pushed back from the table and, in time and out, danced the polka on the dusty carpet till late in the evening. There, even if we were inclined to flirt and were not very clever or respectable, we were human beings. (*PSS* 5: 6)

Tolstoy carefully and skillfully lures the reader into almost subconscious agreement with the narrator by using this type of comparative argumentation--an agreement that might not necessarily be based on a similar view of the problem but rather on the reader's sympathetic connection with the basic human emotions triggered by the author.

In *Lucerne* we can clearly see Tolstoy's developing inclination for general philosophical themes as well as moral and ethical generalizations. Here the author shifts his focus from psychological observations of the individual to the wider questions of the social and historical existence of man. However, despite the fact that the problematics of *Lucerne is* considerably wider than those of its predecessor "Albert," there is still a strong connection between the two works, reflected not only in the fact that the central character in this story is also a musician cast out by society but even more in the close echoing and similar treatment of the art theme itself. As if continuing the discussion of the purpose of art and the artist's vocation that he started in "Albert," Tolstoy endows his narrator in *Lucerne* with the following reflections concerning the role and fate of art in society:

> This is the strange fate of art!' I reflected, having grown a little calmer. 'All seek it and love it--it is the one thing everybody wants and tries to find in life, yet nobody acknowledges its power, nobody values *this greatest blessing in the world*, nor esteems or is grateful to those who give it to mankind. ...One thing alone causes you to act, and will always influence you more strongly than any other motive power in life, and that is the need for art, which you do not acknowledge, but which you feel and will always feel as long as there is anything human left in you. (*PSS* 5: 21)

This passage is closely reminiscent of many similar reflections in the preceding story, only in a more condensed and finished form; in particular it contains the phrase "this greatest blessing in the world" that immediately triggers in our memory parallels with those climactic passages from "Albert" where Tolstoy concisely states the main idea of the work, producing almost word for word the formulation that he chooses to revive in *Lucerne:* "He loves but one thing--beauty, the one indubitable blessing in the world" (*PSS* 5: 21).

We have touched on some of the most significant passages in the later story in order to highlight the development of Tolstoy's techniques of argumentation which combine with his descriptive artistry, as well as to highlight the continuity of his creative concepts that flow one into another each expanding and building on previous experiences. In such works as *Childhood* and *The Sebastopol Stories* the reading public has already experienced the power of Tolstoy's descriptive artistry which largely resided in his nature descriptions and in character portraiture, but it is in *Lucerne* that Tolstoy makes perhaps the first attempt to fuse his nature descriptions with philosophical discourse in the search for the right balance between the two dominant elements of his style. This search will continue throughout his literary career and will culminate in *War and Peace* where Tolstoy will struggle especially hard in his attempts to reconcile the

historical-philosophical and novelistic aspects of his epic novel.

Despite Tolstoy's initial enthusiasm about the story and his rare personal satisfaction with the final product, *Lucerne* became yet another step on the way to the creative crisis experienced by the writer in the late 1850s. The work was an awkward mix of genres: *Lucerne* represents a peculiar combination of the factual style of a diary with the biting criticism of a journalistic pamphlet; it also displays a certain overly zealous youthful maximalism with the author boiling over in his criticism of the ills of western civilization. All this did not find many sympathizers either among literary critics or even Tolstoy's closest literary friends. Turgenev called *Lucerne* a "moral-political sermon" and after his initial acquaintance with the story in Baden where he spent four days with Tolstoy wrote to Botkin sharing his opinion of the work: "I've read his small thing written in Switzerland--I didn't like it: a mix of Rousseau, Thackeray and an abridged orthodox catechism" (*Perepiska s russkimi pisateliami* 1: 223). Turgenev advised Tolstoy not to publish the story, but upon his arrival to Petersburg, Tolstoy gave a reading of *Lucerne* at Nekrasov's dacha on August 1, 1857 and shortly afterwards Nekrasov, who apparently approved of it, sent the manuscript to press. The story was promptly published and appeared in the next September issue of *The Contemporary*. Panaev, one of the head editors of the journal was present at the reading and after the publication of the story wrote to Botkin on October 29:

> His story *Lucerne* produced an unfavorable impression on the public. When I heard it from the author's lips who read it with inner indignation and tears in his eyes at the end, this story made a powerful impression on me, but afterwards, when I reread it myself, it produced a completely different impression. It is obvious that it was written

> by a noble and talented but very young person who draws God knows what conclusions from an insignificant fact and mercilessly condemns everything that had been worked out by mankind in sweat and blood... Passionate but ridiculous; besides, out from behind this story slightly peeps out a Russian gentry lordling... No, it is too early for him to philosophize--he needs to live and learn a little." (*Turgenev i krug Sovremennika* 427-428)

Botkin in his turn became acquainted with *Lucerne* after its publication and responded to Panaev in January of 1858 also with a sense of disappointment: "I've finally read Tolstoy's *Lucerne* here and sincerely regretted that he didn't listen to Turgenev's advice and has published it. This is in all respects not only a childish thing but even an unpleasant one--appearing magnanimous it is petty, and the author himself plays a most unattractive role in it" (*Turgenev i krug Sovremennika* 437).

Tolstoy himself upon receiving the September issue of *The Contemporary* experienced deep disappointment in his "article" as he called *Lucerne* and wrote to Nekrasov in October of 1857: "...upon rereading what abomination and trivial abomination my published article turned out to be. I completely fooled myself by it and you as well as it seems" (*Perepiska* 1: 95). At the end of the month on October 30 Tolstoy would make the following entry in his diary: "My reputation has fallen or is barely squeaking by. And inside I am deeply grieved but now I'm a little calmer as I know that I do have something to say and the strength to say it powerfully and then the public can say whatever they like. But I need to work honestly and exert my every effort then let them spit on the altar" (*PSS* 47: 161). However, Tolstoy's hopes to rehabilitate himself and to restore his shaken reputation with new works were not realized. As mentioned earlier, his story "Albert" which appeared in the August issue of

The Contemporary in 1858 received a cold welcome from both fellow writers and literary critics who did not dedicate a single significant review to it. The subsequent novella *Family Happiness* would appear already after Tolstoy's definitive break-up with *The Contemporary* and be published in *The Russian Herald.* It became the final and personally most devastating downfall in the chain of literaryfailures that led to the writer's decision to abandon literary pursuits.

Family Happiness – "the darling novella"

Family Happiness continued the autobiographical trend started by Tolstoy in *Childhood* and interrupted by the writing of *The Novel of a Russian Landlord.* In his diary from 1856 we find the following entries that point to the obvious connection between unrealized plans for the continuation of *The Novel of a Russian Landlord* and the concept of *Family Happiness:* June 9, 1856: "The landlord wants to find in the girl that he likes a support for his honorable plans; she as if excuses this weakness of mind and heart in him because of his other good qualities;" November 18, 1856: "To *The Novel of a Russian Landlord.* He dreams of family happiness--a wife in a white house-coat, then he goes to bump around Russian life." Tolstoy drew the material for *Family Happiness* primarily from his personal emotional experiences during his relationship with Valeria Arsenyeva, who nearly became his fiancee in 1856. As seen from the writer's diaries of the time, he was strongly attracted by the idea of family life and seriously considered marriage. During his prolonged correspondence with Arsenyeva Tolstoy explicitly expressed his understanding of life and his ideals of happiness, trying to entice Valeria with his future plans of peaceful country life filled

with "quiet love, friendship, the delights of family life, a friendly circle of dear people, poetry, music and the main pleasure--the realization that there is a purpose to your life, that you are doing good and do not have anything to reproach yourself for" (*PSS* 60: 118). In Tolstoy's epistolary deliberations about the differences of character and life experience between Valeria, and himself we can clearly see an outline of the main collision of his future novel. Resorting to a simple allegory, calling Arsenyeva Miss Dembitskaya and himself--Khrapovitsky, Tolstoy in his letters describes a possible trajectory for their future marital relationship:

> Khrapovitsky is a morally tired man who in his youth committed a lot of follies for which he has paid with the happiness of the best years of his life... deep inside he despises high society, adores quiet moral family life and more than anything in the world is afraid of dissipated high-society life, where all good, honest and pure thoughts and feelings disappear ... Dear Miss Dembitskaya has not yet experienced any of that; in her understanding happiness is a ball, décolleté shoulders, a carriage, diamonds, acquaintance with chamberlains, adjutant-generals etc. (*PSS* 60: 108)

Despite the fact that Tolstoy's correspondence with Arsenyeva eventually petered out and their relationship ended, it left a lasting impression on the writer and not long after Tolstoy decided to reconsider the future of Khrapovitsky and Dembitskaya in his new novel and finish the analysis of their possible marital relationship in fictional form.

As can be seen from Tolstoy's diaries, the concept of the novel was already born in 1856, but the major part of *Family Happiness* was written between 1857 and 1858, while the work on the novel entered its final stage at the beginning of 1859. By that time, the ideal of the "happy little world" once proclaimed by the writer himself and propagated in the novel by its main character Sergei Mikhailovich, had been definitively

overcome and even criticized by Tolstoy, as we have seen in the letter to A. A. Tolstaya cited earlier. Perhaps this fact explains Tolstoy's decision to tell the story in the voice of the main heroine Masha, whose state of mind involving personal searching, doubts and passionate impulses was more in tune with the writer's new mood. It seems that Tolstoy's attitude towards the idea of "family happiness" in its old sense which had been so fully expressed in his letters to Arsenyeva had drastically changed and was regarded by the author with a certain tinge of irony, an irony which can be heard in the title itself. However, *Family Happiness* occupies an important place in the creative laboratory of Tolstoy, as even in this work that was written with "the subjective poetry of sincerity" we can already trace the birth of important creative concepts such as the family vocation of the woman that will be developed by the author later in *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina.* Overall the novel can be regarded as an initial study for the family scenes in *War and Peace.* All the nuances of intimate relationships, all the crises of the young family are conveyed by Tolstoy with exceptional psychological authenticity. In *Family Happiness* Tolstoy demonstrated the skills of a brilliant psychologist--he managed to penetrate and impersonate the mindset of the young woman in whose person the story is told to such a convincing degree that as readers we never stop to think that the author is actually a man. This gender impersonation also affected the style of *Family Happiness:* Tolstoy's direct and pointed language which is usually free of any stylistic adornment gave way here to a certain literary smoothness of style whose soft lyricism is reminiscent of the manner of Turgenev, especially in the nature descriptions.

Nevertheless, the novel was not received favorably in the broad public and did not engender any significant response in contemporary criticism, although brief though sympathetic remarks appeared in *The Petersburg Gazette* and the journal *Northern Flower*. Literary publications of a democratic orientation, including *Sovremennik,* did not give the novel even a passing mention. This might partially be explained by the fact that Tolstoy's work was published in *The Russian Herald* headed by Katkov--a journal hostile to *Sovremennik.* Later, Soviet critics saw one of the main flaws of the work in the fact that the emotional life of the characters was stripped of social and public motivation, it was deprived of the "air of the times" and lacked topical interest: in telling the story of her life the main heroine focused almost exclusively on the analysis of her personal feelings and her self-enclosed little intimate world apparently did not reflect spirit of the times. Never mind that the juxtaposition of the patriarchal country estate life to the high-society lifestyle of dissipation and idleness eventually destroys the happy idyll of the characters; this was ignored by the critics and did not qualify as a social theme. Naturally they also were unmoved by the aesthetic merits of the novella, the masterfully created dramatic intensity of its second part and its beautifully crafted nature descriptions.

Tolstoy finished writing *Family Happiness* in March--April of 1859 and soon turned it over to *The Russian Herald* for publication. Probably Tolstoy had already begun to doubt the merits of his novel even as he was preparing it for publication, as at some point he wanted to print it under a pseudonym. But he experienced even greater disappointment when he reread the proofs of his new creation. He immediately wrote

an agonized letter to Botkin pleading with him to stop publication and burn the manuscript:

> Vasiliy Petrovich, Vasiliy Petrovich! What have I done with my *Family Happiness* ... *what* a shameful stain on me, not only as a writer but as a human being, is this loathsome composition. You talked me into sending it to press, so for that you must be the confidant of my shame and remorse. Now I'm dead as a writer and as a person! In the whole thing there is not a single living word. And the deformity of the language originating in the deformity of the thought is unimaginable.....If you manage to save me from increasing shame and prevent the publication of the second part, then burn it as well as the rest of the manuscript, having taken it from Katkov. (*PSS* 60: 296)

The author by his own confession felt so ashamed and remorseful that he was prepared to return the money he had gotten for the work to the publisher, if the latter only agreed to cease publication of the novella. And for the longest time even so much as a thought about *Family Happiness* made Tolstoy "blush and cry out" (*PSS* 60: 298).

With his usual harsh self-criticism, the writer judged his work more severely than the most demanding critic. And this acute dissatisfaction with himself and his literary work was not accidental. In 1859 Tolstoy found himself at the threshold of a philosophical and creative crisis, whose causes were complex and deeply rooted in the writer's mentality and his life philosophy. In Soviet criticism the accepted point of view on this is that it was Tolstoy's close association during this period with the leaders of the aesthetic movement that had brought him to complete creative devastation. It was believed that at the end of this period Tolstoy was reduced to writing "darling novellas" for a narrow circle of art epicureans, which had resulted in his deep personal dissatisfaction with his work, to the point that the idea of renouncing everything that he

had written during this period even crossed Tolstoy's mind. However, this is oversimplification of the intricate and complex process of self-determination and personal and professional formation that Tolstoy was undergoing during this decade. His close involvement with the aesthetic movement early on in his creative career allowed Tolstoy to work out his approaches and form his personal attitude towards some very enduring and controversial aesthetic issues concerning not only literature but art in general. Without this it would have been impossible for Tolstoy to make the transition to the next, more successful creative stage in his writer's biography. We know that he will be revisiting and developing these same aesthetic questions throughout his long literary career, and his life-long reflections on this topic will find their logical conclusion in his influential tract *What Is Art?* written towards the end of his creative life.

The crisis that Tolstoy experienced manifested itself in the writer's decision to abandon his literary pursuits altogether--it was a hard detour but at the same time necessary one, as Tolstoy felt the need for a break, especially in the light of his latest literary failure and the almost total indifference of the reading public as well as the critics towards his recent works. Tolstoy felt that he was not striking a chord and that he had failed to touch upon the topics that were stirring the minds of the majority of his readers. Either he could not discover themes that would resonate with the readers' mind-set or he could not find the effective creative means for their realization; whichever it was, Tolstoy understood a critical need to change his approach to literature. Besides, with his usual heightened sense of social conscience Tolstoy responded to the urgent need for social reform in society and could not and did not want to ignore the

acuteness of the problem. It is not unlikely that while as an artist he disagreed with the principles and methods of the new critical movement in literature, deep inside as a citizen Tolstoy shared their beliefs and fully realized the importance of raising relevant social questions in literary works. However, for the moment he chose the different, non-literary path of active civic participation. On October 9 of 1859 in response to Druzhinin's urgings that he write another novella for his journal, Tolstoy wrote the following:

> Now as a writer I am worthless. I'm not writing and haven't been writing since the time of *Family Happiness* and it seems that I will not write again. At least I flatter myself with this hope. Why is it so? It is too hard to say and it will take too long to explain. The important thing is that life is short and one should be ashamed to waste it in one's mature years on writing such novellas as I have written. I may, should and want to do real work. It would be all right if their content was such that it tormented you and cried out for expression, made you daring, gave you pride and strength – that I understand. But honest to God, I cannot bring myself to write darling novellas very pleasant for reading at the age of 31. (*PSS* 60: 308)

The real work for which Tolstoy longed so much became the school for peasant children which he founded in 1859 on his estate at Yasnaya Polyana.

Chapter IV: Tolstoy's Pedagogical Interlude

AT THE CROSSROADS: THE PROBLEM OF CREATIVE TRAJECTORY

As has been mentioned previously, after several unsuccessful literary experiments in the late 50s including "Albert" and *The Notes from Lucerne* that could be considered in a way Tolstoy's first didactic tract which ushered the writer's breakup with the journals and his successive preoccupation with pedagogy, Tolstoy feels lost and unsure about his literary work. The chain of professional disappointments culminated in the novel *Family Happiness*, whose schematic plotline and undetermined style led to the inorganic mingling of several genres such as high societal, English family novel and feminine novel as well as a certain noticeable loss of Tolstoyan manner of expression in the language and imitation of Turgenev's and Tiutchev's style, especially in the nature descriptions. At this point in his literary career Tolstoy has to solve not so much the problem of art per se but the problem of his own creative trajectory and to determine his future literary path. In order to continue writing he feels the need to create for himself special conditions, to free himself from the journal literature. As a result, Tolstoy seeks independent activity not connected with the literary world, so the thought of the school at Yasnaya Polyana seems to Tolstoy as a logical and organic way out of this professional and personal deadlock.

The end of the 50s in Russian literature was the beginning of a new epoch marked by crises and the rocking of the old foundations. The so-called "new people" have come onto the scene and were in many ways hostile to the "people of the 40s"; they brought

along with them new literary interests and tasks. The fine literature that enjoyed undisputed supremacy just a few years before, now has lost its authority and significance to the new journalistic genre. The dominance of social and political matters was felt acutely in every sphere of life, including literature.

Tolstoy feels thrown out of contemporary literature: a new time has come, the time of the new literary critical trend with the main epigones of which the writer has little in common and, most importantly, does not share their methods and philosophy. He writes to Nekrasov and Turgenev about the decline of *The Contemporary* and expresses his discontent with the one-sided nature and low quality of literature representing the new critical movement. In February 1858 Tolstoy breaks up his professional alliance with *The Contemporary* and turns to another rival journal *The Russian Herald* [*Russkii Vestnik*] in 1859, so "Albert" becomes the last work published by Tolstoy in *Sovremennik.* He is trying to re-determine his literary position: the historical pressure at this moment is so powerful that there simply cannot be indeterminate, uncertain positioning in the middle – creative material not tinted by a specific authorial attitude passes unnoticed. Rebelling against this historical tendency and particularly against politicized literary fractions and different movements, Tolstoy even attempts to create his own journal where he could escape from politics and public commissioning, however, this purely aesthetic enterprise did not meet with his friends' approval and could not materialize. This instant has been thoroughly discussed in the previous chapter, so we do not want to elaborate more on this subject here. Instead, it would be helpful for us to cite

Boris Eikhenbaum's thoughts about the position that Tolstoy occupied at this historical point in his professional evolution. Eikhenbaum calls Tolstoy a "militant archaist" referring to his striving to create a type of "high art that goes against the so-called contemporaneity and does not aim to serve the needs of the mass reader (this tendency reveals the archaic nature of Tolstoy's position as well as his historical mission)." Eikhenbaum also notices that Tolstoy at this point even gravitates to the epistolary genres that were so popular in the 18th century; as an example he takes *The Notes from Lucerne* that was written as a feuilleton and in its composition is very close to the old didactic genres, namely the genre of epistolary travel logs (313).

At the same time, Tolstoy acutely feels the limitations of any given movement or literary group, including the camp of the "pure art" defenders among which he is reckoned by many of his friends. He cannot lock himself inside the "aesthetic shell" – art alone is not enough -- it is time for him to turn his attention to the moral laws, to didactics. Especially so since this direction is so organic for Tolstoy and he has been dwelling on this problem for a while, as shows the following entry in his diary made on December 20 1853. Here Tolstoy, admiring Karamzin, out of all writers, expresses his ardent agreement with the 18th century author about the sole purpose of literature:

> Reading Karamzin's philosophic foreword to the journal *The Morning Light* [*Utrennii Svet*] which he had published in 1777 and where he states that the purpose of a journal consists in the love of wisdom [liubomudrie], in the development of human mind, will and feeling that it guides towards virtue, I was astonished by how we could lose to such a degree the notion of the only purpose of literature – the moral one; we lost it to such an extent that if you start talking about the necessity of moralizing in literature, nobody will understand you. But truly, it would not be harmful as in fable if each literary work was accompanied by the words that a moral is its goal. In *The Morning Light* they published thoughts about immortality of the soul, about purpose of a man, from Phaidon, the life of

> Socrates and etc. Perhaps it was an extreme, but now we have gone to the other, a much worse one. Here is a noble and feasible goal for me – to publish a journal the sole aim of which would be the dissemination of helpful (morally) writings, where the only condition for the acceptance of compositions would be that they have a moral; the publication or not publication of which would depend on the author's will. Furthermore, that without an exception there would be excluded any polemics and mockery of what so ever from this journal; in its very direction it would not collide with other journals. (*PSS* 46: 87)

As can be seen from this entry Tolstoy already as a beginning writer determined for himself the moral dominant for his literary occupation, something that he has always believed in and deeply admired. It is also quite apparent that he has been bothered by the journalistic atmosphere of bitter rivalry that surrounded literary journals of the time and bred animosity and politicized division among the fellow writers.

In January 1858 Tolstoy begins to write a story *Three Deaths* and it is no coincidence that he chooses a form of a parable – Tolstoy opposes to the contemporary critical journalistic genres the evangelical, not a tendentious genre but a moralistic, fable like one. It is as if Tolstoy contrasts temporary, fleeting interests of the contemporary reality with the eternal, common to all humankind interests, thus fulfilling his propensity for "moral art." As Boris Eikhenbaum insightfully notices "Tolstoy turns the contemporary into the category of eternity, social into the moral category, and an essay into a parable" (344). Later on, the work on *The Cossacks* allows the writer to detach from the politics and immerse himself into the purely artistic material. We find a characteristic entry in Tolstoy's diary around this time (March 21 1858) that very well reflects the tendency of the moment to depart from the political life into the art world: "I am all engulfed by *The Cossacks*. The political excludes the artistic, for the first one in order to prove, should be one-sided" (*PSS* 48: 10). Tolstoy realizes that at this historical

moment the writer has ceased to be an independent free artist but is commissioned by the journals that are at the service of the reading public. He painfully experiences the crises of literature at the end of the 50s, the prevalence of embittered satire and the indifference to the purely literary questions – all these factors eventually contribute to Tolstoy's departure from the contemporary literary scene and his retreat toYasnaya Polyana, which allowed him to regroup and find a completely different and unexpected twist for the continuation of his literary career. Tolstoy expressed his professional position in the speech at the meeting of the Society of Devotees of the Russian Philology that he delivered on February 4 1859. In this speech Tolstoy renders the critical literature its due and agrees that the infatuation of the society with the politicized literature was "noble, necessary and even temporarily just", it was necessary for the "development of the civic feeling in the society." However, he states that the one-sidedness and narrowness of the approach can satisfy neither the growing demands of the reading public nor the developmental requirements of literature itself. Tolstoy emphasizes that "a national literature is a complete, comprehensive consciousness of the people, in which should be equally reflected the people's love for the good and the truth as well as the people's contemplation of the beautiful at a given epoch of its development." The writer expresses his hope that the society has already understood a simple truth consisting in the fact that "despite the great significance of the political literature, which reflects in itself temporary interests of the society, and despite its necessity for the national development, there is also another kind of literature, reflecting in itself eternal, common to all mankind interests, the most treasured, intimate beliefs of the people, the literature intelligible for a

person of any nation and any time, and the literature without which has not developed a single nation that has strength and richness." Tolstoy voices his belief that the society will soon understand the importance and necessity of the two separate kinds of literature – the critical and the fine one, which both can meet diverse demands of the society. Meanwhile, Tolstoy feels too acutely the overwhelming presence of the "political literature" and chooses to step aside in order not to be swept away by the "dirty political torrent" that "threatens to devour the whole literature" (*PSS* 5: 272-273).

In the letter to Egor Petrovich Kovalevskiy (a brother of the Minister of Public Education at the time) written in March 1860 Tolstoy reveals the connection between his departure from the literary path and his new pedagogical plans. It is permeated by the realization of needlessness of the literature that he has served in the conditions of the contemporary Russian reality and the epoch. Tolstoy sincerely expresses his concern about the state of public education in the country and connects the progress of Russia not so much with the further development of any given literary trends but first of all with the successful educational policy for the people, which he entrusts not to the government but to the educated conscientious citizens of the country. We read the following:

> In the case of progress of Russia, it seems to me, that regardless of all the usefulness of telegraphs, roads, steamboats, carbines, literature (with all its funds) – theaters, Academies of Arts etc., all of it is premature and useless as long as the almanac reads that in Russia out of all number of students only 1/100 part of all the people are being educated. All of it is useful (academies etc.), but useful in the same way as a dinner at The English Club which will be eaten in its entirety by the manager and the cook. All of these things are being produced by all the 70.000.000 Russians but being consumed only by thousands. …Not only to us, the Russians, but to every foreigner who has traveled 20 versts in the Russian land should be strikingly obvious the numerical disproportion between the educated and uneducated population or rather the savage and the literate.

> …However, I have gotten carried away by my pedagogical habits and it makes me laugh that I am in earnest trying to prove to you here that 2 x 2 = 4, that is, the most vital necessity of the Russian people is public education. This education does not exist. It has not begun yet and will never begin if the government will be in charge of it. (*PSS* 60: 328)

Among other educational matters discussed in the letter, Tolstoy informs Kovalevskiy about his draft of the Society for Public Education and solicits his help and direct participation in this project. This letter states rather clearly Tolstoy's motivation behind his future pedagogical strivings and his decision to step away from the literary scene. It seems Tolstoy has formed a strong conviction that literature in Russia exists for and serves interests of a narrow group of literary men, he feels claustrophobic in such limited and enclosed atmosphere; Tolstoy needs masses of readers and disciples with his thirst for practical action and pathos of moral influence. The tendency to break out of the narrow circle of intelligentsia which is the main producer and the consumer of literature is already evident at this point. Some years later these strivings will take Tolstoy to the idea of "literature for people", which will combine in itself the principles and methods of lubok literature ("The First Distiller", for example) with the elements of high literary genres. Tolstoy is searching for a new impulse that will recharge his creative work with fresh and powerful ideas and will give it a new trajectory.

THE YASNAYA POLYANA SCHOOL AS THE WRITER'S EXPERIMENTAL LABORATORY

He wants to oppose something powerful, earthy and tangible to the contemporary and fleeting tendencies of the metropolitan literature and what a better place to look for an inspiration than his home estate Yasnaya Polyana, where Tolstoy has always felt safe,

adequate and useful. From now on Yasnaya Polyana becomes for him not only a laboratory of household management but also a creative laboratory with its own specific culture which provides a perfect outlet for his thirst of useful social activity as well as his creative impulses.

Tolstoy's preoccupation with pedagogical activities in the early 1860s is regarded by some researchers as a brief separate period in the writer's life which has become a deviation from his literary strivings, a manifestation of the philosophical and creative crises experienced by Tolstoy at the end of the previous decade. Undoubtedly, Tolstoy felt an acute personal need for the change of occupation at that period as his literary career reached its deadlock and brought him little satisfaction at the moment. He withdrew from the literary scene and turned his eyes towards his home estate Yasnaya Polyana that has always been his anchor and his harbor from all the troubles and temptations of the world. He was searching for the "real," earthy work that will help him to fill in the void and to channel his creative frustration into something more tangible and at the same time useful to the people. Thus the opening of a school for peasant children at Yasnaya Polyana in the autumn of 1859 became a logical step on the way to Tolstoy's personal and professional transformation. The work connected with the school brought Tolstoy not only the moral satisfaction that he desired so much and could not find in his literary pursuits at the time, but what is more important, gave a new meaningful direction for his literary ideas and eventually stimulated him to return to writing. Tolstoy's pedagogical works form an important link to his fiction, and should not be viewed as a digression from his development as a writer, but as an integral part of it. It becomes

especially obvious after reading Tolstoy's notes from the pedagogical journal *Yasnaya Polyana*, which the writer started to publish in 1862 and where he discussed various pedagogical and methodological issues side by side with the literary problems; the language that Tolstoy employs in his pedagogical writings is remarkably artful, clear, concise and free of overt didacticism. The school at Yasnaya Polyana became a testing ground not only for Tolstoy's pedagogical theories but also for his creative ideas, which he checked against his students' perception.

Yet another evidence that Tolstoy never quite completely abandons creative writing is the fact that in the midst of his pedagogical interlude he continues his work on *The Cossacks*, as can be traced in his notes on the Yasnaya Polyana school where he discusses some of the characters and the developing plot of his new novel with his peasant students. We can say that this period is marked for Tolstoy by an intense fermentation of creative thought that results in the publication of numerous stimulating works on the theory and practical methodology of pedagogy as well as his novel *The Cossacks* and the short story "Polikushka" in 1863. It is also worth mentioning that circa 1860 Tolstoy begins his work on yet another very important novel, *The Decembrists,* that was never brought to completion by the author, but eventually became a direct source for *War and Peace*. Undoubtedly, Tolstoy's meeting with his Decembrist cousin, Prince Sergey Volkonsky in December of 1860 during his second European trip, spurred his work on the historical novel, although Tolstoy himself referred the conception of the novel to a much earlier date – the year of 1856 as can be seen from the draft of the preface to the first part of *War and Peace*:

> In 1856 I began to write a novella with a certain orientation, the main character of which should have been a Decembrist returning with his family to Russia. Involuntarily, from the present I crossed over to the year of 1825, to the epoch of my hero's delusions and misfortunes and then I abandoned it. But even in 1825 my character was already a mature family man. To understand him I needed to turn to the time of his youth and his youth coincided with the glorious for Russia epoch of 1812. (*PSS* 13: 54)

In any case, regardless of the date of conception, the psychological image of Labazov, the main character in *The Decembrists*, and his wife Natalia Nikolaevna are in many ways related to the characters of Pier Bezukhov and Natasha Rostova in *War and Peace*. As V. Veresaev justly observed: "In the good-natured and enthusiastic eccentric Pier Labazov and his wife Natalia Nikolaevna it is not hard to recognize Pier and Natasha Bezukhov" (Veresaev 7: 122). By 1863, when Tolstoy revised and corrected the earlier written chapters of the novel, he was not so much interested in the story of the Decembrist's return to Russia in 1856, but rather in the new conception of the novel about the year of 1825, which eventually directly turned into the conception of *War and Peace*.

THE PRIMER AS A CREATIVE PRODUCT OF THE SCHOOL

Another important creative product that resulted from this period of Tolstoy's passionate and enthusiastic preoccupation with the cause of people's education is *The Primer* that was published in 1871. It comprised four books that included a vast range of materials, starting with the illustrated alphabet, proverbs and sayings, short stories, anecdotes and riddles. A separate part of each book was dedicated to the translated and adapted by the author fables of Aesop as well as various works of Russian, Western and Eastern epos that were chosen by Tolstoy as the reading material. Another part of each

book was devoted to the excerpts from the Old Russian Chronicles and selected Gospels from the Bible. Finally, each book concluded with a chapter on arithmetic, which also contained short articles that were designed to acquaint students with the basics of natural sciences such as astronomy and physics. Needless to say that such grandiose undertaking took Tolstoy years of preparation and dedicated work and even though the actual date of publication of the first *Primer* lies beyond the scope of this chapter it is easy to see that Tolstoy's pedagogical work at Yasnaya Polyana became a direct source and inspiration for the creation of this outstanding teaching material. Already in the early 60s in connection with his school work and writing and compilation of reading materials for the people, Tolstoy studied a great number of textbooks, children's magazines, old chronicles, Russian and foreign folklore and even some works of the Arabic epos. He believed that writing of a *Primer* was one of the most challenging tasks as it required from the author the "knowledge of Greek, Indian and Arabic literatures, as well as it needed to include all natural sciences, astronomy and physics" (*PSS* 61: 283). In his *Primer,* Tolstoy reworked and synthesized some elements borrowed in part from a wide range of textbooks and readers, however, all those elements were adapted by Tolstoy with such creativity and artful simplicity that his *Primer* by far surpassed all the existing contemporary educational materials of this type in the diversity of its content and its visual-auditory teaching method. At the same time Tolstoy's *Primer* became an exceptional phenomenon in the sphere of pedagogical literature of that period in terms of the artfulness of its style and the clarity and simplicity of the language. As a matter of fact, it was the work on the language that cost Tolstoy such tremendous effort and the

application of all his artistic ability. Tolstoy aimed to achieve a clear-cut and unadorned style of expression while writing the articles and short stories for his *Primer*, which presented him with the toughest challenge as he admitted in one of the letters to A. A. Tolstaya: "The work on the language is terrible – it is necessary that everything would be beautiful, brief, simple and most importantly clear" (*PSS* 61: 283). It is indicative that one of the main sources for Tolstoy in his work on the language was not only his close studying of the folk literary heritage, but also his frequent conversations with peasants and pilgrims whom he met during his daily walks along the Kievskii highway that passed nearby his estate. From these encounters he drew valuable practical knowledge of the spoken folk language. Tolstoy's older son Sergei L'vovich Tolstoy reminisced in this connection:

> Father used to say that pilgrims' stories substituted for folk literature and even newspapers. He liked to talk with passers-by, walking along the way with them or sitting on the side of the road. Some of their legends and tales turned under his pen into literary works. The knowledge of the way of life of working people, of folk language, local, northern, the Volga-region, Ukrainian dialects, of numerous sayings and proverbs – all of that father gathered on the highway. Along the road were passing local peasants, familiar and unfamiliar ones, sober and slightly drunk, with full carts and empty ones… By the highway the peasants were chipping stone and he would strike up a conversation with them as well. (Sergei Tolstoy, *Ocherki bylogo* 89, 91)

The school work with peasant children also provided Tolstoy with numerous opportunities for the study of folk language and the vernacular. In the early 60s the title of Tolstoy's pamphlet "Who Should Learn from Whom to Write – the Peasant Lads from Us or We from the Peasant Lads?" might have sounded as a paradox to many of his critics, but for Tolstoy it was not a contradiction, but rather a conclusion based on his observations and teaching experience. Indeed, Tolstoy was not only a teacher to his

peasant pupils but also their student. During his school lessons and outside the classroom Tolstoy spent many hours in close contact and communication with his pupils, observing and listening carefully to the way they expressed their thoughts, both orally and in writing. Very often he took part in their collective creative projects, learning from them the peculiar manner of folk speech expressions.

Sergei L'vovich Tolstoy in his article "Yasnaya Polyana in Tolstoy's Creative Work", describing his father's studies with the peasant children, testifies that Tolstoy used and adapted his pupils' stories in his own works, giving preference to their oral rendering over the formal literary speech. Sergei Tolstoy writes:

> In his *Books for Reading* one of Aesop's fables is told in the following way: A Lion, Donkey and a Fox set off hunting. They caught many animals and the Lion told the Donkey to divide the prey. The Donkey divided everything into three equal parts and said: now take it! The Lion became furious, ate the Donkey and told the Fox to divide the prey again. The Fox gathered everything in one big pile and left just a little bit for herself. The Lion looked at the pile and said: "Well, that's a good girl! Who taught you to divide so well?" She said: and look what has happened to the Donkey?! – In the original, Aesop says: example of the Donkey. Tolstoy wanted to replace the bookish expression "example of the Donkey" by some other words but could not find the right ones. While retelling the fable, one of the pupils instead of "example of the Donkey" said: "and look what has happened to the Donkey?!" and Tolstoy borrowed this expression for his adaptation of the fable. (Sergei Tolstoy, *Yasnaya Polyana. Stat'i i dokumenty*. 101-102)

Later, in the beginning of the 70s Tolstoy would define more clearly his understanding of the ideal language for a writer and would often raise his voice against the literary convention. We read in his letter to N. N. Strakhov written in March of 1872:

> It will not occur to a single Frenchman, German or an Englishman in his sane mind to stop and to ponder like I do over the question whether the devices and the language in which we write and I used to write are the false ones; but a Russian if he is not insane must think about it … and try to search for different devices and the language. And not because I decided so but because our present-day language is repulsive as well as the devices and I am drawn to another language and devices (that happen to be folk) by the involuntary dreams… I wrote a completely new story for *The Primer - A Prisoner in the*

> *Caucasus*… This is an example of the devices and the language in which I am writing and will be writing for the grown-ups. (*PSS* 61: 277-278)

All stories and popular scientific articles included in *The Primer* were written in the same style and language as the example above demonstrates. Among the last concluding stories there are three, namely "The Life of a Soldier's Wife," "How I Was Not Taken along for a Ride into Town," and "How I Was Caught by a Storm in the Forest" that were written by the pupils of the school and were published in the supplements to the Yasnaya Polyana journal. The first two stories were stylistically and compositionally reworked by Tolstoy, but the third one was just slightly touched up by him in regards to its style, and all three of them Tolstoy included in the reading section of his *Primer* without a comment about their authorship. The fact that these stories do not stand out in any way from the wide range of other stories written by Tolstoy for *The Primer* vividly demonstrates to what extent the writer managed to capture some of the finest peculiarities of the folk language and became rather proficient in its usage. Thus, the time starting from the opening of the Yasnaya Polyana school up to September of 1871 (when Tolstoy began to work exclusively on the compilation of *The Primer*) can be regarded also as a long preparatory period that eventually led to the creation of *The Primer*. During this period Tolstoy experimentally tested different methods of teaching grammar and reading, acquired a wide knowledge of various sources from which he later drew topics and materials for his stories and had done an extensive practical research of the folk language.

Tolstoy started working with peasant children at the Yasnaya Polyana school in the early autumn of 1859, and as can be seen from his correspondence from this period, he regarded his new pursuit as an occupation filled with genuine moral as well as historical meaning, juxtaposing it to the "petty and false" world of the contemporary belles-lettres (*PSS* 60: 327). This attitude is especially clearly revealed in Tolstoy's letter to B. N. Chicherin written in the beginning of 1860:

> What am I doing? – you will ask me. – Nothing out of the ordinary or made-up, I am doing the work that is as natural to me as breathing the air and at the same time, from the heights of which, I admit, I often love to look down upon the rest of you with criminal pride. You will fall in love and understand this work, but one cannot describe it in words; instead upon having finished your wanderings, come to Yasnaya Polyana and tell me then truthfully, whether you would not be envious of me to see what I have done and the calmness with which I am doing it… I have not left and will not leave the country this year and from this time onward I cannot imagine how and why I would leave. (*PSS* 60: 328)

The question of public education was at the time a topical problem that had been intensely discussed in the press. Different journals of various orientations and political affiliations dedicated numerous articles to this topic that had also been at the center of public attention. So it was not surprising or unexpected in the least that Tolstoy's imagination became captivated by the idea of people's education. However, what was original is his practical and unconventional approach to the problem is that it combined the ways of a dilettante educator with the methods of a professional writer. Tolstoy was attracted not so much by the public or social side of the question but rather by its moral and emotional implications that could help him to resolve the problem of his social behavior at the time of his literary crisis. Besides it perfectly coincided with Tolstoy's

vision of a writer as an educator of the masses and his emerging principles of moral art. As A.Wilson perceptively mentions in his Tolstoy biography:

> Ever since a brief, abortive, attempt to start a school at Yasnaya Polyana in 1848, he had nursed the ambition of educating his peasants. It had begun as an idea straight out of Rousseau. As the century advanced, his desire to be an educator was one of the things which anchored him most closely to his country's destiny. He shared with the revolutionaries, with the Church, the Government, the emergent *intelligentsiya*, a desire to capture the uneducated minds of the peasantry. But he differed from nearly all in his desire, which anticipates a lot of twentieth-century educational theory, to allow each child to develop as an individual. He did not simply regard them as vessels to be filled up with information and ideas. (153)

GERMAN POPULISM AS A SOURCE OF PEDAGOGICAL INSPIRATION

However, Tolstoy's love for Rousseau's philosophical concepts was not the only source of inspiration behind his pedagogical interlude – some of its central ideas and approaches seemed to have leaped into Tolstoy's imagination straight from the pages of an obscure novel *New Life* [*Neues Leben*] written by one of the representatives of the German populist movement Berthold Auerbach whose ideas were widely spread among the members of Russian intelligentsia in the 1850s. The fact that a long novel in three parts which did not have any particular success at home in Germany was translated into Russian and published in 1876 attests to the enduring preoccupation of Russian intelligentsia with the imported ideas of German populism for over two decades. The first edition of Auerbach's collected works came out in Russia in 1858; it included the reworked edition of the novel and Tolstoy had it in his library. Evidently, Tolstoy had read Auerbach's novel before his second European trip and even before he decided to try himself as a school teacher. We find the evidence of Tolstoy's growing interest in

Auerbach's works in his diaries from 1856. On December 8 he noted: "I have read the marvelous *Tolpatsch*," then on December 9 – "I have read Auerbach a little," and on December 10 – "from 2 to 8 am I have been reading the wonderful *Befehle* by Auerbach" (*PSS* 47: 104). Eugene Schuyler an American diplomat, historian and translator who visited Tolstoy in October of 1868 at Yasnaya Polyana gave a very insightful account of Tolstoy's veneration of Auerbach in his essay "Count Leo Tolstoy Twenty Years Ago" that appeared in the *Scribner's Magazine* in 1889. He reminisced the following:

> In helping Tolstoy rearrange his library I remember that the collected works of Auerbach were given the first place on the first shelf, and, taking out the volumes of "Ein Neues Leben," the Count told me to read it after I had got to bed, as it was a very remarkable book, and added: "It was owing to this that I started a school for my peasants and became interested in popular education. When I went back to Europe the second time I went to see Auerbach, without giving my name. When he came into the room I merely said, 'I am Eugen Baumann,' and when he hesitated in surprise, I hastened to add: 'not really in name but in character;' and then told him who I was, how his book had set me thinking, and what good it had done me. (738-739)

Tolstoy introduced himself to Auerbach by the name of his novel's main character Eugen Baumann and it would have made for a nice anecdote in itself, especially since Auerbach recalled to Schuyler at their later meeting how frightened he was when "this strange-looking man said, 'I am Eugen Baumann,' for he feared he was going to threaten him with an action for libel and defamation of character," if this fact did not show to what extent the central ideas of Auerbach's novel resonated with Tolstoy's self-perception and his life trajectory at the moment. It seems that he regarded the novel not simply as a literary work of certain value to him but as a sort of code of instructions that could help

him to find a new practical occupation and thus cut the Gordian knot of his literary deadlock.

The plot of the novel must have intrigued Tolstoy and caught his interest as he was looking for a new occupation in the country. The main character of the novel, Count Eugen Falkenberg, a revolutionary who was imprisoned after the Revolution of 1848, escapes prison and plans to immigrate to America when by chance he meets with a country teacher Baumann who is on his way to a new place of service. They exchange documents and the Count arrives in the village as a new teacher Eugen Baumann. The ideological content of the novel especially, with a heavy tint of populism filled with reflections and discussions about people and people's education, about methods of teaching and peasants' way of life – all topics for Tolstoy's moral and social issues – must have captivated his attention. As Boris Eikhenbaum insightfully comments: "Many pages of the novel seem to be written by Tolstoy himself." As an example he quotes a conversation between the Count and the teacher from the very beginning of the novel in which Count Falkenberg voices his opinions that, in Eikhenbaum's words, "must have struck Tolstoy by their similarity with his own opinions and attitude", especially as expressed in *Notes from Lucerne*:

> The root of evil of the modern society lies in the fact that everybody waits for a wide revolution and nobody wants to begin with oneself. Many Barons and rich people become socialists and even communists in theory; it is easy to do because they know that it will not lead to anything, and meanwhile they are enjoying all the life's blessings: thousands of people burning with indignation at the sight of the grievous state of their neighbors shout: "Equality! Equality!" but themselves are burdened by the company of shoemakers and workers and will never consider sitting at the same table with their servants. But I swore to give myself wholly to the service of my love for the poor, dirty, depraved and nevertheless holy people. (Eikhenbaum, *Lev Tolstoy* 41)

Indeed, the similarities in the style and pathos as well as social and moral innuendo between the passage cited above and some authorial reflections in *Notes from Lucerne* are stunning. Tolstoy, who never took any abstract theories or methods on trust and felt especially inclined at the moment to fight against every organized system of believes must have been also rather inspired by the advice that the teacher gives to the Count concerning the methods of teaching the country children:

> Remember one thing: when you enter the school and see on the benches combed and disheveled children, clear your throat and say to yourself: everything that you know is good for nothing, all your methods from Adam to Wuerst and Becker are good for nothing – you yourself are the best teacher. Ask children questions, look through their notebooks and move forward. Create your own method together and everything will go well. Any abstract methodology is a systematized lie; the best a teacher can do in a school depends personally on him, on his natural inclinations. (qtd. in Eikhenbaum, *Lev Tolstoy* 42)

Aside from discussions on general topics such as art, government and law the novel contains plenty of purely pedagogical material such as detailed descriptions of Eugen's lessons and conversations with children that will be recreated by Tolstoy in his own pedagogical practice at Yasnaya Polyana and captured in his pedagogical journal with such genuine enthusiasm and affection. After reading some of the passages in Auerbach's novel dedicated to Eugen's search for the appropriate method and form of teaching as well as some inspired teachable moments when Eugen experiences true flashes of pedagogical epiphany described in the following terms: "Eugen's face was beaming with serene light as if radiant glances of the children looking at him were captured inside of him," it becomes impossible to ignore the apparent connection

between Auerbach's views on public education and Tolstoy's adaptation of this German writer's ideas into his own system of beliefs in regards to pedagogy and people's education. We will return to this point later during our analysis of Tolstoy's notes on school lessons at Yasnaya Polyana, where the comparison becomes especially appropriate, but for now let us take a closer look at the description of Eugen's approach of complete freedom and mutual respect that he decided to adopt with his students:

> For each Wednesday he added a lesson and allowed the children the freedom of choice – whether to come to school or stay home. Not a single child would miss this lesson because during it everyone could offer a question on anything they wanted; here there was never a lack of lively cheerfulness. It was hard in general to bring children to ask questions, and particularly the questions that concern the mysterious phenomena and relations of life; despite the warnings they thought that they should ask only about school subjects, but at last he managed to steer this class in the desired direction. Naturally, with the first question "why?" the shyness was thrown away and there continuously followed a whole torrent of curiosity. (45)

From Eugen's conversations with children it is worth to quote one that practically mirrors some of Tolstoy's descriptions of his talks with his own students that we find in his notes on theYasnaya Polyana school; the similarity is especially striking in the tone of confidentiality, perceptive observations and mutual respect that the teacher establishes in the classroom:

> Herr teacher, - asked Franz, - what's the use from the ground being frozen during the winter? – The use is that one can skate and sledge, - answered some. – That one can dig in the stone quarry, - answered Dagobert… - The soil also wants to sleep, - whispered a usually timid girl with a high forehead. Eugen approved her having explained that fertility of the soil substantially depends on its ability to change and decompose, that is why the freezing of the ground belongs to the most wonderful and wise laws of nature. (45)

At the end of the novel Eugen in his long monologue summarizes the main ideological premises of the novel and states his understanding of the teacher's purpose. His representation of teaching as a creative process and as an educational activity that can bring the highest measure of moral as well as creative satisfaction to all participants must have greatly appealed to Tolstoy and evoked his genuine sympathy:

> I know why I was and must be a school teacher… I need to form, educate, develop something. I experience enjoyment only when I can work creatively and this constitutes the highest pleasure for me… There at my school I experienced the bliss to which nothing can compare… I took as my slogan the appeal of Pestalozzi. I want to remain a school teacher." (46)

It is easy to see why the novel so deeply steeped in the ideas of German populism made such a lasting impression on Tolstoy: it was permeated with the kind of moral sentimentalism that Tolstoy always gravitated to, moreover, it echoed closely his natural propensity for educating, developing and forming ideas and minds. Much later in life Tolstoy reminiscing about his pedagogical experiments and the Yasnaya Polyana school would look back on it as the happiest and morally most pure period of his life. In his response to S. A. Rachinskii, who shared his personal public school experiences, Tolstoy wrote on April 5 of 1877: "You would not believe what true and rare happiness your letter brought to me… Reading it I was reliving my old school days which will always remain one of the dearest and especially pure memories" (*PSS* 62: 317). In his diary entry from April 8 1901 we read: "The happy periods of my life were only those when I dedicated myself entirely to the service of people. Those were: the school, my work as Arbiter of the Peace, famine relief and religious help" (PSS 54: 94).

TOLSTOY'S EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNEY

Thus Tolstoy, with the help of Auerbach, determined a new, exciting and gratifying pedagogical pursuit that not only offered him a perfect creative outlet, but also a rather noticeable public platform for the expression of his views on education as much as literature. The only problem was that Tolstoy was a dilettante in the field of education and was not very familiar with the contemporary educational theories or schools. His work at the Yasnaya Polyana school, his thoughts and observations that he made there as well as an ambitious plan to publish a pedagogical journal – all of that confirmed for him that he needed to gain a more intimate knowledge of the subject. So Tolstoy decided to become personally acquainted with the pedagogical practice of the leading European countries and see how they did things in Germany, France and England. His European trip was also precipitated by his elder brother Nikolai's illness who was suffering from tuberculosis and had gone abroad to receive treatment. As the fall harvest approached, and the children disappeared into the fields, Tolstoy decided to leave the school in the charge of his assistant teachers, and on July 2 1860 he embarked a steamship in Petersburg bound for the Prussian town Shtettin. During his nine month long voyage Tolstoy predominantly was interested in teaching practices of public schools and visited some of them in Germany, France, Switzerland, England and Belgium. His diary from that period is filled with observations regarding their methods, students and teachers who despite their laconism represent rather valuable material as in some of them we find the first sprouts of many of Tolstoy's pedagogical ideas. If in the center of Tolstoy's first European trip was France, now Germany naturally became the focal point of the second

visit. Tolstoy left for Europe as a sincere admirer of Auerbach, his village stories and particularly his novel *New Life*. Shortly before his departure from Russia Tolstoy read Auerbach intensively as can be seen from his diary entries and pondered some important issues in connection with this reading. Probably under the influence of it there appears the following observation in his diary on May 26 1860: "A strange religion is mine and the religion of our times – the religion of progress. Who said to one man that progress is good? It is only the absence of faith and the need for conscious activity clothed in faith. A person needs an outburst, Spannung (tension, enthusiasm), yes" (*PSS* 48: 25). Undoubtedly, some of the main premises of Tolstoy's polemical article "Progress and the Definition of Education" that was published only in the last issue of *The Yasnaya Polyana Journal* in 1863 can be traced back to the entry cited above. Abroad Tolstoy spent most of his time visiting public schools and kindergartens, reading books on history of education and meeting with ordinary teachers as well as some of the most prominent European pedagogues of the time. Tolstoy's diary gives us an excellent representation of his educational experiences abroad and his evolving views on the system of public education in Europe. It is apparent though that from the very beginning Tolstoy took a very critical approach to most existing teaching practices and methods that he observed in European schools. He felt extremely disappointed with the lack of freedom and respect for the needs of the students as well as the prevalence of thoughtless memorization and boring scholastic routines widely applied in most educational institutions that he had a chance to visit. Here are some characteristic observations pertaining to the pedagogical sphere that Tolstoy made in his diary during his trip:

> July 16 1860, Kissingen: Was at school for little children – bad just the same. Phonetic method; July 17: Was at school. Horrible. Prayer for the King, beating, everything is memorized by heart, scared, deformed children; July 19: Read history of pedagogy. Luther is great… Yesterday also visited an American pastor about schools. The teaching of religion is only the Bible without explanations or abridgements; August 5: Montaigne was the first who clearly expressed the thought about the freedom of upbringing. In upbringing again the main thing is equality and freedom; August 7: Had a little time to read Riehl about almanacs. He is right about the organic meaning of the people's old almanacs and in general people's literature originating from the people. But where is Auerbach's place? An intermediary between people and the educated class; August 11: An acquaintance with a young school teacher who is concerned with the question whether they should write across two lines or one. An old slave to routine; August 16: A thought about the experimental pedagogy made me excited, but couldn't contain myself, expressed it and made it weaker; August 17: Read pedagogy…; August 27: Went to Schwalbach. A nice teacher took me to a church, played the organ; August 28: School. Methods of teaching reading and counting… Boarding schools for men and women. (*PSS* 48: 26-29)

Thoughts about the almanacs and people's literature, numerous excursuses into the history of pedagogy, the reflections that the only method of education is experience and the only criterion of it is freedom, logically introduce us to the programmatic article "On the Education of the People" that opened the first January issue of *The Yasnaya Polyana Journal*, into the sphere of the reflections and ideas that found their first expression in the diary.

THE PROGRAMMATIC ARTICLE "ON THE EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE"

In this first essay written abroad Tolstoy gives us a gist of his outlook on the established educational practices for people in some leading European countries such as Germany, France and England – an in-depth overview of their historical development rather persuasively argued by the author to prove their inadequacy and even harmfulness to the cause of public education. A running undercurrent of thought in the article centers around the idea that there is a general desire for learning among people which,

paradoxically, runs counter to what the established order of society considers to be education and thrusts upon unwilling pupils in the public schools. Tolstoy's whole argument for a new and radically different approach to schoolwork proceeds from this dichotomy. Instead of a united educational enterprise, says Tolstoy, there is a constant struggle going on between the people and the educational establishment as "the people constantly resist the efforts which society or the government, representing the more educated stratum, makes to educate them, and for the most part these efforts fail" (*PSS* 8: 4). Notwithstanding, Tolstoy continues to state, "the demand for education is present in every human being; the people love and seek education as they love and seek air to breathe. The government and society have a burning desire to educate the people and, in spite of all the force, the cunning devices and the obstinacy of governments and educated classes, the common people constantly declare that they are not content with the education offered to them and, step by step, give in only to force" (*PSS* 8: 5). So why is it that this yearning for education is accompanied by such a profound distaste for schooling among common people? In search of this answer Tolstoy reviews philosophical, sociological and historical approaches to the formation of the traditional school system and its mode of operation and finds their common denominator that leads to a peculiar contradiction which clearly reflects Tolstoy's personal contempt for any established theory or organized movement: "this same common and yet self-contradictory thought is to be felt throughout the history of pedagogy – common because everyone demands a greater measure of freedom for the school, self-contradictory because everyone prescribes laws founded upon his own theory and thereby restricts freedom"

(*PSS* 8: 10). After the first-hand examination of the compulsory schools all over Europe with their characteristic discipline, standardized content, methods and assessments, Tolstoy is overwhelmed by the sharp contrast between the intellectual vitality of children's lives outside school and the dull passiveness of their schooldays. In a vivid passage Tolstoy describes two different psychological states of the same child observed at home or in the street, and then at school: in the first case we see "a creature full of the joy of life and knowledge, with a smile in its eyes and on its lips, seeking instruction in all things as a joy, expressing its own thought clearly and often forcefully in its own language – in the other you see a weary, huddled creature, with an expression of fatigue, terror and boredom, repeating with the lips alone the words of others in the language of others, a creature whose soul has hidden in its shell like a snail" (*PSS* 8: 14). Tolstoy argues that upon entering school a child becomes immersed in the environment which systematically devalues his personality and background. He is deprived of the "chief pleasure and need of childhood days – freedom of movement", "he is forced to speak not in his own patois but in a foreign language", but most importantly, the school does not answer questions which are provoked by life, "it is constantly answering the same questions as were posed by mankind several centuries ago, and then not by children, questions with which the child is not yet concerned" (*PSS* 8: 13). Tolstoy sees the solution to this paradox in the integration of the family and home conditions into the schooling system as these are the essential elements of the "unconscious education" which children receive at home, at work and in the street and which are, in his opinion, the essential conditions of development that nature itself has created for the child. Not

only that, but interest in knowing anything whatsoever and the questions which it is the school's task to answer, as Tolstoy firmly believes, are aroused only by these home conditions, and any study ought to be simply an answer to a question provoked by life.

In his attempt to elaborate a pedagogy of freedom in opposition to the traditional pedagogy of compulsion which "regards the human being in the process of education as a creature completely subordinated to the trainer", Tolstoy proposes the example of a mother teaching her child to speak as his ideal image of free, reciprocal and progressive model of education. He argues that "education in the most general sense, including upbringing, is that activity of man which has as its basis the demand for equality and the immutable law that education must move forward. A mother teaches her child to speak only so that they can understand one another, instinctively the mother tries to come down to his view of things, to his language, but the law of forward movement in education does not permit her to come down to him, but obliges him to rise to her knowledge. The same relationship exists between writer and reader, between the school and the pupil, between government and voluntary societies and the people" (*PSS* 8: 25). As Michael Armstrong insightfully observes, the essence of the mother-child relationship, as Tolstoy sees it, is its reciprocity, and the reciprocity which he has in mind is the reciprocity of conversation. Armstrong considers this premise central to Tolstoy's theory. He argues that for Tolstoy this relationship is the model of all genuinely educational relationships. It is through just such a reciprocal interchange of thought and language, whether with mother, teacher, writer, scholar or friend, that children achieve understanding, knowledge and skill. But

the process is one which transforms the understanding of both parties though in diverse ways according to the experience of each. The mother's knowledge is no longer the same for conversing with her child, nor the writer's for conversing, as it were, with the reader, nor the teacher's for conversing with the pupil. Many of the most memorable passages in the educational essays are directed towards showing how Tolstoy himself has been forced to reconsider his own understanding – of art, literature and morality no less than of education – in the light of his conversations with his pupils. It is also important to mention as Armstrong notes that the image of conversation as central to education recurs in contemporary thought in the writings of Michael Oakeshott, but with the crucial difference that Oakeshott is concerned with higher rather than elementary education. It is Tolstoy's most distinctive and extravagant claim that education almost from the start can become conversational. Conversation is not for him an achievement of elementary education so much as the very heart of its method, "an unrehearsed intellectual adventure", to appropriate Oakeshott's phrase, which begins almost from the moment pupil and teacher meet (Armstrong, *Tolstoy on Education* 35).

Reading Tolstoy's opening programmatic essay on public education we cannot help but notice to what extent Tolstoy is preoccupied with the all important for him question of literature for people. As a matter of fact, after reading some of the passages from the article we may get an impression that Tolstoy is concerned not so much with the study of European system of public education per se but rather with the study of common people as the reading masses and their literary tastes. Tolstoy directly links the failure of

public education to the nonexistence of accessible literature for people and of the people, in his own words: "an irrefutable proof that the people are uneducated is the fact that there is no literature of the common people…." (*PSS* 8: 11). In the following excerpt, for example, the question of people's education is simply superseded by a more vital for Tolstoy problem of the true source of the education for common people, the so-called "unconscious education" that Tolstoy favors so highly over the compulsory one enforced by the establishment, and in close connection with it the role of literature in people's education. Upon his arrival in Marseilles, Tolstoy has visited all the accessible educational institutions for workers and became convinced that all of them were "extraordinarily bad." At the same time, he received a very favorable impression of the common French people's intellectual and social skills despite the poor level of their public education. Tolstoy writes:

> The French people are …quick of understanding, intelligent, sociable, free-thinking and truly civilized. Take a look at an urban workman of about thirty – he can already write a letter without the sort of mistakes he made at school, sometimes perfectly correctly; he has some idea of politics and consequently of recent history and geography; by now he knows some history from novels; he has some knowledge of the natural sciences. He very often draws and he applies mathematical formulae to his craft. Where has he acquired all this? (*PSS* 8: 19)

Tolstoy found the answer to this question when he began to wander after school through the streets, dance halls, café chantants, museums, workshops, quays and bookshops:

> The same boy who answered me that Henri IV was killed by Julius Caesar knew the story of *The Three Musketeers* and *Monte Cristo* very well. In Marseilles I found twenty-eight cheap editions, from 5 to 10 centimes, with illustrations. For 250,000 inhabitants they have a circulation of 30,000 – consequently, if we assume that ten people read and listen

> to each copy, then everyone reads them. Besides this there is the museum, the public libraries, the theaters. Cafés – there are two big cafés chantants, which anyone has the right to enter if he spends 50 centimes, and which are visited by up to 25,000 people a day, not counting the small cafés which accommodate an equal number – in each of these cafés short comedies and scenes are performed and verses are declaimed. Here already, at the lowest reckoning, is a fifth of the population which receives oral instruction every day, just as the Greeks and Romans were instructed in their amphitheaters. Whether this education is good or bad is another matter, but there it is, an unconscious education, so many times stronger than the compulsory one, - there it is, an unconscious school undermining the compulsory one and making its content almost nil. (PSS 8: 19-20)

It is rather characteristic that Tolstoy is so interested in the question of popularity of certain authors and particular genres of literature among people, as this knowledge will prove important later in the 1870s during the writing of his *Primer* that we have discussed earlier. The search for a transitional literature, which might mediate between the vernacular tales and songs and the literary classics, preoccupied Tolstoy throughout the period covered by his educational essays and continued to do so long after he had abandoned his school. Drawing on his practical teaching experience and the information that he gathered during his European journey, Tolstoy attempted to create, single-handed, an entire corpus of transitional literary material for peasant children, composed partly of his own stories, partly of adaptations and translations from other literatures. This anthology of readings, fictional and non-fictional, has never grown obsolete and can be considered perhaps Tolstoy's greatest achievement for education after the sixties. To compile it Tolstoy fine combed world literature and folklore, and engaged in careful background studies to substantiate the articles on nature and general science. His version of stories from sources ranging from the *Arabian Nights* to Maupassant are frequently reprinted for Russian children today. Best of them are the remarkable series of stories

that Tolstoy wrote himself for *The Primer* imitating the style of his students' essays, among them are "A Prisoner in the Caucasus," "The Bear-Hunt" and "God Sees the Truth."

THE YASNAYA POLYANA SCHOOL PEDAGOGICAL ESSAYS AS A FORM OF ARTISTIC CREATION

The deeper undercurrents of Tolstoy's interest in pedagogy have been perhaps most undeniably manifested in the series of three articles-reports "Yasnaya Polyana School in the Months of November and December" that were subsequently published in the January, March and April issues of *The Yasnaya Polyana Journal* in 1862 and eventually became a basis for a later pamphlet "Should we teach the peasant children to write, or should they teach us?" As a matter of fact, these works are only loosely connected with the questions of pedagogy, their genre can be more precisely defined by the term "literary pamphlet" where Tolstoy defines and formulates main principles of his own artistic method and that contain the embryos of the future stories for people and the art tract. The language and style that Tolstoy employs in these writings is remarkably artful and free of overt didacticism. They represent a masterful fusion of the artfulness and lyricism of description with the theoretical methodological questions of pedagogical content. Tolstoy finds a wonderful balance of all these elements where his most cherished thoughts and observations about the children's psyche take the form of authorial digressions in a highly lyrical vein, whereas the programmatic content is carefully interspersed or impregnated into it. Hence is the absence of the edifying or didactic tone but rather something reminding of a diary log in the form of an intimate and

inviting conversation with the reader. Such is, for example, an account of the evening lessons enveloped in the atmosphere of poetic dreaminess which can be easily mistaken for an excerpt from Tolstoy's earlier trilogy *Childhood. Boyhood. Youth.* for the artistry and a certain pathetic lyricism of the descriptions:

> All the evening lessons, and especially this first one, have an atmosphere, quite distinct from those of the morning, one of tranquility, dreaminess and poetry. If you come to the school in the twilight – there is no light at the windows, it is almost quiet, only the newly trodden snow on the stairs, a faint hum and stirring on the other side of the door and some urchin hanging on to the banisters going up the stairs two at a time prove that there are pupils in the school. Enter the room. It is already almost dark behind the frost-covered windows; the oldest and the best pupils are pressed right up against the teacher by the others and are looking right at his mouth, with heads flung back. The self-reliant girl with the worried face from the domestic servant's family always sits on a high table, it looks as if she is gulping down every word; the small fry sit further away, rather closer-packed; they listen attentively, even angrily, they behave as the big ones do, but in spite of all their attention we know that they will not retell the story, although they will remember a lot. …When a new story is in progress they all freeze and listen. When it is a repetition self-satisfied voices ring out here and there, unable to hold back from supplying the teacher with something. However even when it is an old story, which they love, they ask the teacher to repeat it all in his own words and do not permit anyone to interrupt the teacher. It hurts them that the character and artistic form of the teacher's narrative should be interrupted. Recently it has been the story of the life of Christ. Each time they demanded that it should all be retold. If they were not told all of it then they themselves would supply the well-loved ending – the story of Peter's denial and the Savior's passion. Everything seems as quiet as death, nothing stirs – have they perhaps gone to sleep? In the half-darkness you go up to one of the little ones and look at his face; he is sitting with his eyes glued to the teacher, frowning with attention and for the tenth time pushes away his friend's arm which has dropped on to his shoulder. You tickle the back of his neck, he does not even smile, flicks his head as if driving away a fly and once more devotes himself entirely to the mysterious and poetical story: how the veil of the temple was torn of its own accord and darkness covered the earth – he feels mystified but happy. But now the teacher has finished telling the story and everyone gets up from his place and, each one shouting louder than the next, crowding round the teacher, tries to recount everything that he has retained." (*PSS* 8: 40)

Reading this excerpt it becomes quite obvious that Tolstoy's pedagogical interlude becomes a form of artistic creation for the writer where the boundaries between fiction and reality are blurred and the school children undergo the same kind of analysis through most scrupulous observation as Tolstoy's literary personages. This description

occupies less than a page in the essay but provides us with a memorable snapshot of the school's activities, its atmosphere complete with the detailed description of the children's perceptions and their behavior in the classroom. All of a sudden it is not so hard for the reader to imagine the "self-reliant girl with the worried face" sitting on a high table gulping down every word of the teacher, she comes alive in our imagination under Tolstoy's pen just like Natasha Rostova perched on the windowsill in Otradnoye, we are completely charmed into the mysterious and poetical atmosphere of the class evoked for us by Tolstoy and even want to believe as he did that the children are concerned about the "artistic form of the teacher's narrative." Tolstoy goes on to describe in the same vein the physics experiments that also take place in the evening at school and here as well instead of a dry and a matter-of-fact account of scientific facts, the reader is transported to a mysterious and fantastic world of natural science where the "fairy-tale world passes into reality." With this inspired description Tolstoy infects us with the excitement of his pupils' as the shroud of mystery is lifted for them and they are initiated into the world of knowledge:

> In the evenings we have singing, progressive reading, talks, physics experiments and essay-writing. Of these subjects reading and experiments are the favorites. …Not everybody is allowed into the experiments class – in the second class only the eldest, and the best, the most reflective. This lesson, as regards the character it has assumed in our school, is one best suited to the evening, the most fantastic lesson, entirely appropriate to the mood which is evoked by reading fairy-tales. Here the fairy-tale world passes into reality – they personify everything: the juniper-berry which is repelled by sealing wax, the magnetic needle which repels, the filings scurrying across a piece of paper underneath which a magnet is drawn, all these represent living creatures to them. Even the cleverest boys, who understand the explanation of these phenomena, get carried away and start to mutter at the needle, the berry and the filings: "Just look! Hey, where are you going! Get it! Ooh! Roll it in! and so on." (*PSS* 8: 42-43)

The style of the narration of this three-part essay is so engaging, unpretentious and captivating in its subtle artistry that it is easy to forget that that we are not dealing with a well-written piece of fiction here but rather an artistically charged pedagogical essay. And we are quickly reminded of its programmatic content when Tolstoy manages to get his point across by impregnating it into the most vivid and unexpected digressions with a rather distinct poetic flare. An excellent example of such writing would be a passage in which Tolstoy describes sledge riding at the end of a school day – a seemingly unassuming but charming depiction of winter fun unexpectedly leads us to a definition of Tolstoy's ideal of the teacher-student relationship:

> Usually the lessons end at eight or nine, unless carpentry keeps the older boys back longer, and the whole gang runs shouting together as far as the servants' quarters and from there on begins to make off towards various corners of the village in groups that shout across from one another. Sometimes they take it into their heads to coast downhill to the village on a big sledge which is parked by the gate – they tangle with a snowdrift, go slap into the middle and disappear from view with a shriek into the powdered snow, leaving here and there on the road – black patches – boys that have tumbled out. Outside school (in spite of all its freedom), in the open air new relations are established between teacher and pupil with more freedom, more simplicity and more trust, the kind of relations that appear to us to be the ideal towards which a school should strive. (*PSS* 8: 43)

Yet another wonderful example of this technique where Tolstoy masterfully merges two genres – the fictional and essayistic – and uses the powerful artistry of his descriptions in order to bring forth or reinforce the programmatic content of his pedagogical essays is the excerpt dedicated to the problem of punishment at Yasnaya Polyana school. Here we are presented with a powerful and emotionally charged account of an incident in which a boy is being punished for stealing. The description is so intricately constructed and works on so many levels on the reader's perception that it

leaves no doubt about Tolstoy's artistic intentions but at the same time retaining our focus on the moral problem of punishment. The incident is described in painstaking detail complete with a strikingly real yet artful portrait of the pupil-thief as well as other students' complex responses to the situation, their choice of punishment for the offenders and, of course, Tolstoy's invaluable observations over his students' psychological motivations and the moral conclusion that the author draws based on his analysis of the incident:

> The boys who were being punished wept. The peasant boy who had been led astray by his comrade – a talented story-teller and wag – a fat, white, chubby little fellow, wept quite without reserve, with all his childish strength; the other, the principal offender, hook-nosed, with a dry-featured, clever face, was pale, his lips trembled, his eyes gazed wildly and viciously at his rejoicing schoolfellows, and occasionally his face would be unnaturally distorted by weeping. His cap with its torn peak was perched on the very back of his head, his hair was disheveled, his clothing covered in chalk. All this now struck me and everyone as though we were seeing it for the first time. Everyone's malicious attention was directed at him. And he felt this painfully. When, without looking round, his head hanging, with a certain special guilty way of walking, as it seemed to me, he set off for home, and the lads running after him in a crowd teased him in a way that was somehow unnatural and strangely cruel, as if an evil spirit were controlling them against their will, something told me that this was wrong." (*PSS* 8: 38)

The whole scene is strangely evocative of Tolstoy's much later story written in 1903 "After the Ball" where the main character-narrator Ivan Vasil'evich experiences very similar feeling of shame, disgust and physical nausea at the scene of the soldier's punishment by making him run the gauntlet. This is yet another example that no experience was wasted in Tolstoy's creative laboratory and early pedagogical experiments at Yasnaya Polyana school had been carefully stored in the writer's mind to lay a foundation for his later creative work. And even though a more mature Tolstoy in the fictional piece does not feel the need to express the moral of the story overtly, as

readers we fully experience all the horror, violence, absurdity and immorality of punishment inflicted by one human on another, just like a much younger Tolstoy experiences remorse and utter disgust as he tries to administer a humiliating form of punishment upon one of his pupils labeling him a thief:

> I looked at the face of the boy who had been punished, which was yet paler, more suffering and more cruel, and for some reason I was reminded of convicts, and suddenly I felt so remorseful and disgusted that I tore the stupid label from him, telling him to go where he liked, and suddenly I was convinced, convinced not intellectually but with my whole being, that I had no right to torment that unhappy child, and that I could not make of him what I and the inkeeper's son wanted to make. I became convinced that there are secrets of the heart which are hidden from us, on which life may have an effect, but not moralizing and punishments. …Our world of children – of simple, independent people – must remain pure, free from self-deception and the criminal belief in the legitimacy of punishment, a belief and a self-deception which holds that the sentiment of revenge becomes just as soon as we call it punishment…." (*PSS* 8: 38-39)

Annenkov P. V. in his perceptive article on Tolstoy's *Cossacks* in 1863 wittingly noted that Tolstoy's pedagogic activity is "nothing less than a new kind of his artistic creation." Having learned a great deal about Tolstoy in the 50s through their close friendship, Annenkov understood that the school that Tolstoy ventured was not a regular school and Tolstoy was not a typical teacher:

> Tolstoy treats the children of his famous school with the same aspirations as the fictional characters of his literary works and the surrounding world in general. Behind the teacher's desk he is still the same psychologist, a keen observer and a fanatical adherent to his faith in beauty and the truth of everything innate as he is behind his writing desk. The work material has changed but the nature of work has stayed the same, only his analysis has acquired a positive character instead of the former negative one." (Annenkov, *Vospominaniia* 290)

In his very insightful review Annenkov uncovers Tolstoy's true intentions behind his pedagogical venture and taps into the core of the problem, namely the public

acceptance of the validity of Tolstoy's pedagogical ideas and approaches, something for which he was so mercilessly criticized by Chernyshevsky and his followers. Unreservedly recognizing Tolstoy's achievements in the analysis of the child's will and soul, Annenkov however believes that "the logical consequences of the purely artistic attitude towards school often lead to a doubt about the merit of the latter as the means and tools of pedagogy" and that the antinomies developed by Tolstoy in his journal "cannot constitute the goals of pedagogy as a science; they are rather themes for free creativity in the field of literature and the sphere of teaching" (292). Annenkov makes an important point by saying that success of a school founded on Tolstoy's principles of complete freedom and creativity would greatly depend on the outstanding artistic abilities and creative powers of its founder which would be unreasonable to demand from each director of a public school, and it would be problematic even for an artistically gifted pedagogue to observe all the prescriptions of the "poetic theory of public education created by Tolstoy." Annenkov observes that even Tolstoy himself is not completely faithful to his principles as despite his aversion for any attempts to implant in pupils his personal spiritual inclinations, it is quite obvious that in his school the methods of triggering students' imagination and fantasy have primarily been developed. He continues to say:

> The Yasnaya Polyana school has become a nursery of natural poets; it was immediately filled with extremely darling writers of different ages, Tolstoy's pupils compete in creative composition and it is all very well… But Tolstoy goes too far in his joy to see how easily and effortlessly his school produces great writers. In connection with the work of one of his young poets, the story "The life of a soldier's wife," that indeed can be distinguished for the charm of its fresh, immediate article in *The Yasnaya Polyana Journal* the title of which fully expresses its content. Here it is: "Should We Teach the Peasant Lads to Write, or Should They Teach Us?" It is not a whim of a dialectician, not

> a joke and not a deliberate sophism – the author is truly convinced that literature should be reduced to the naïve observations of the life's immediate occurrences in which smart and gifted boys always excel. Pointing to some pages of "The life of a soldier's wife" he sincerely exclaims: "I have not encountered anything like this in Russian literature," just as previously he sincerely has been talking about the superiority of his pupil Fomka over Goethe. Tolstoy does not want to know that a literary man should indeed not write like this, that a decent literature has an obligation to not only convey life occurrences with certain warmth and vivacity, but also to search for their place in the series of other phenomena and their relationship to the higher ideal notion of themselves, to their moral and clarified type. …For Tolstoy a saga or a folk legend can replace history, a song composed by the joint efforts of the people can replace personal creative work, an omen and a saying can replace all the inquisitive development of the questions of natural history and philosophy. There at least leads the intense search for simplicity, natural truth which can constitute the strength of a writer as well as the source of his unjustified (unrealizable) infatuations." (239)

Undoubtedly, Annenkov is right in his sensible analysis of Tolstoy's pedagogical endeavor – already from the school descriptions in *The Yasnaya Polyana Journal* it is quite evident that the main element of Tolstoy's pedagogical pathos is what Annenkov calls a purely "artistic attitude to school" driven by Tolstoy's propensity for social polemics. Tolstoy does not teach so much as he experiments, trying to prove to himself and others the existence of aesthetic needs in the system of values of even a simple peasant child thus hoping to regain faith in his literary occupation and to destroy his own aesthetic nihilism that has developed under the social pressures of the epoch. It is as if Tolstoy is searching for the philosopher's stone which will help him to successfully return to his creative writing – he needs to assure himself that this creative work is not a mere caprice or an amusing pastime but a natural, inborn necessity. Tolstoy also rather assertively persuades us in the existence of such aesthetic need on the pages of his school descriptions; many of them are remarkable artistic sketches that have a clearly defined composition and a carefully thought-out structure; they can practically stand on their own

as independent short stories creatively woven into the fabric of the pedagogical essays. Such is, for example, a talk with three boys Fed'ka, Syomka and Pron'ka on the way home from school when Tolstoy tells them during their walk through the winter forest about abreks, cossacks and Hadji Murat, and the story of his aunt's Countess Tolstoy murder which unexpectedly turns into a fascinating conversation about beauty and usefulness of art. This description has all the makings of a classic scary story with a very unpredictable ending. Tolstoy sets the stage with the reading of Gogol's "Vii" the last scenes of which has a strong effect on the pupils and excite their imagination, their senses are heightened and ready for more stimulation. The children have apparently thoroughly enjoyed Gogol's story and have connected with its characters and the theme, as Tolstoy observes, "some of them mimicked the witch and kept on remembering the last night." The setting is perfect – it is a moonless, cloudy, winter night and the boys' agitated imagination desires more excitement. They beg Tolstoy to take a walk with them in the nearby forest and he agrees because just like one of his favorite boys Fed'ka he too takes special pleasure in experiencing danger. Tolstoy's observations about the children's behavior during this nerve-tickling stroll present certain interest to us as they have not only a psychological but also a literary connotation in connection with his Sevastopol and Caucasian stories. We remember that the themes of personal bravery and of human response to danger received a very prominent treatment in Tolstoy's early military cycles. Here is how Tolstoy describes a child's response to the frightening experience:

> Fed'ka begged me the hardest of all, a boy about ten years old, a tender, receptive, poetical and dashing nature. It seems that for him danger is the most important condition of enjoyment. …Now he knew that there were wolves in the wood; that is why he

> wanted to go into the forest. Another one – I shall call him Syomka – is healthy both physically and morally; a fellow about twelve years old, nicknamed Vavilo, walked in front and kept shouting and making warbling calls to somebody. Walking beside me was Pron'ka, a sickly, meek and unusually gifted boy, a son of a poor family, sickly, it seems, mainly from lack of food. Fed'ka was walking between me and Syomka and kept on making remarks in a specially soft voice, now telling how he had guarded horses here in summer, now saying that there was nothing to be afraid of, and now asking 'What if one did jump out?' and demanding categorically that I should say something in reply to that. We did not go into the middle of the wood – that would have been too frightening, but even near the wood it had grown darker: the path could scarcely be seen, the lights of the village had vanished from sight. Syomka stopped and began to listen. 'Stop lads! What's that?' he said suddenly. We fell silent, but there was nothing to be heard; even so it added to our fear. 'Well, what are we going to do when he jumps out and chases us?' asked Fed'ka. We talked about Caucasian robbers. They remembered a story about the Caucasus which I told them long ago, and I began to tell them again about abreks and Cossacks and Hadji Murat. Anyone who knows a little about peasant children will have noticed that they are not used to and cannot bear any sort of caressing, soft words, kissing, stroking with your hand and so on. …I was therefore particularly struck when Fed'ka, who was walking beside me, suddenly, at the most frightening point of the story, touched me lightly with his sleeve; he then gripped two of my fingers in his whole hand and did not let them out. …He was absorbed to the point of cruelty, he felt so creepy and happy holding on to my finger, and nobody should dare to disturb his pleasure. 'Now some more, some more! It's fine!'" (*PSS* 8: 44-45)

Of course, none of Tolstoy's stories would be complete without a beautiful nature scene and this one is not an exception. In the middle of his retelling of the story of Hadji Murat to the boys, Tolstoy pauses to give us an enchanting description of a winter forest which envelops the four of them in its white silence and draws them infinitely close to each other united by the pleasure of one of the oldest art forms in the world – the art of story-telling:

> We walked in silence, stumbling here and there on the unfirm, badly worn pathway; it was as if a white darkness were swaying before our eyes; the clouds were low, as if something were pouring them down upon us; there was no end to that *whiteness* in which we alone were crunching over the snow; the wind roared in the bare tops of the aspens; but for us it was quiet on the other side of the wood. I finished my story by telling how the abrek, having been surrounded, burst out singing and then threw himself upon his dagger. Everyone was silent." (*PSS* 8: 45)

The profound and exciting literary experience of reading Gogol's "Vii" that triggered the walk continues to drive its participants into the realm of imaginative. Deliberately or not Tolstoy enkindles the boys' aesthetic feelings with his stories and all of a sudden they engage into a literary discussion about what will eventually become Tolstoy's final fictional masterpiece – the tale *Hadji Murat* which will be finished forty-four years later in 1904. It is amazing to realize that Tolstoy's creative imagination would nurture this concept for over forty years and what is more astounding is the fact that he would apparently remember the conversation with the three little peasant literary critics that took place on that winter evening and their sincere response to the ending of his story. The boys showed deep understanding of Hadji Murat's final song and even expressed their opinion that it was most likely a prayer – from their point of view, it was the most natural and real way to die for a warrior. Needless to say that Tolstoy remembered these suggestions and incorporated them in the plot of his tale: in the final chapter we read how Hadji Murat outnumbered and surrounded by a large group of militia prepares to meet his death by saying a prayer and even though he does not sing out loud, his last peaceful thoughts are evocative of an old song about a brave warrior Gamzat that he has heard a day before and that resonates so much with his state of mind as well as the circumstances of his last stand. Later, in the heat of the battle when their fate is sealed and they realize that there is no chance of escaping, Hadji Murat's follower Kurban actually sings a Muslim prayer-verse while he is shooting back at the closing-in attackers. Besides, the strong folkloristic element of the tale immediately arrests our attention – the text is saturated with the rich and evocative Caucasian folklore ranging

from lullabies of Hadji Murat's mother to historical ballads and, of course, the omnipresent, here nostalgic, here ominous singing of nightingales. All of this takes us back to the conversation with the three peasant boys amidst the winter forest, to be exact to the moment when Fed'ka suddenly asks Tolstoy about the purpose of learning how to sing. This simple question that was probably asked randomly, without any deep thought had greatly agitated and disturbed Tolstoy as it was his own burning question, moreover it was the question of the times:

> Lev Nikolayevich,' said Fed'ka … 'why do we learn singing? I often think, really, why sing?' 'And why drawing?' said I, not knowing in the least how to explain to him what art is for. 'Why drawing?' he repeated meditatively. He was in fact asking 'Why art?' I did not dare to explain, I did not know how. 'Why drawing?' said Syomka. 'You put everything down in a drawing – you can make anything from that.' 'No, that's technical drawing,' said Fed'ka, 'but why draw figures?' Syomka's healthy nature saw no difficulty; 'Why a stick, why a lime-tree?' he said, still rapping the lime. 'Well then, what is a lime-tree for?' said I. 'To make rafters with,' replied Syomka. 'And what else, what is it for in summer, before it's chopped down?' 'Why nothing.' 'No, really,' Fed'ka continued obstinately to ask, 'why does a lime-tree grow?' And we started to talk about the fact that utility is not everything, but there is beauty, and art is beauty, and we understood one another, and Fed'ka quite understood why a lime-tree grows and why we sing. Pron'ka agreed with us, but he understood better moral beauty – goodness. Syomka understood with his great intelligence, but he would not admit beauty without utility. He doubted, as often happens with people of great intelligence who feel that art is a force but who do not feel in their hearts any need of that force; like them he wanted to approach art with his intellect and was trying to light that fire within himself. …But Fed'ka understood perfectly that a lime-tree in leaf is beautiful, and it is good to look at in summer, and nothing more is needed. Pron'ka understood that it is a pity to cut it down, because it too is a living thing: 'You know it's just as if it was blood when we drink the sap out of a birch-tree.' Syomka, although he did not say so, evidently thought that it was not much good when it was rotten. I find it strange to repeat what we said then, but I remember that we talked over – as it seems to me – everything that can be said about utility and about physical and moral beauty. (*PSS* 8: 45-47)

It would be fair to say that this conversation eloquently summarizes Tolstoy's painful doubts, vacillations and searching of his first creative decade. Of course, these boys to a great extent are conjured by Tolstoy's creative imagination – he endowed their

simple children's questions with the poignant meanings of the epoch. As a matter of fact, this conversation with the boys carries a peculiar resemblance to a similar probable conversation in the editorial room of *The Contemporary* described in the folk style that Tolstoy had mastered so well by the end of his teaching period. Syomka bears an undeniable likeness to Chernyshevsky, and Fed'ka together with Pron'ka greatly resemble Tolstoy with his two opposing tendencies – the aesthetic and the moral one.

"WHO SHOULD TEACH WHOM TO WRITE…?"

The same projection of himself and his epoch can be seen in the essay "Who Should Learn to Write from Whom: Should Peasant Children Learn from Us, or Should We Learn from Peasant Children?" It is Tolstoy's central work of this period and is written with an exceptional pathos that turns it from an ordinary educational tract into a work of literary art. As Isaiah Berlin notes, with justice, in his essay "Tolstoy and Enlightenment":

> Do not teach - learn that is the sense of Tolstoy's essay, …and of all the accounts published in the 1860s and 70s, written with his customary freshness, attention to detail, and unapproachable power of direct perception, in which he gives examples of stories written by the children in his village, and speaks of the awe which he felt while in the presence of the act of pure creation, in which, he assures us, he played no part himself. These stories would only be spoilt by his 'corrections'; they seem to him far more profound than any of the works of Goethe; he explains how deeply ashamed they make him of his own superficiality, vanity, stupidity, narrowness, lack of moral and aesthetic sense. If one can help children and peasants, it is only by making it easier for them to advance freely along their own instinctive path." (Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* 256)

The pamphlet is a logical continuation of the themes developed by Tolstoy in the earlier succession of the three essays "Yasnaya Polyana School in the Months of November and December" with even stronger emphasis on the problems of literary

creative process and its methods. In the similar, already established style of an intimate conversation with the reader, Tolstoy describes two peasant boys (his favorite pupils) Fed'ka and Syomka with whom he forms a very special bond and who apparently personify the primeval, natural creative power for him. In connection with the fascinating descriptions of their intuitive but nevertheless amazingly balanced, creative and artful approaches to writing, Tolstoy also manages to discuss such important questions of literary creation as the tension between artifice and the artistic truth, construction of the plot, the arrangement of descriptions and the characterization, the expressive laconism of the language and the unnecessary verbosity, the use of excessive, disproportionate details and the sense of measure in a work of art, artistry of description, truthfulness of poetical ideas and the vitality of imagination, in other words all the crucial problems of creative writing which has greatly concerned Tolstoy himself and which shed a light on what was important to him personally as a writer.

At the beginning of the essay Tolstoy expresses an opinion that "the principal skill of the teacher in teaching language and the principal exercise whereby we can guide children in their writing of compositions consists in setting subjects, and not so much in setting as in presenting a greater choice, in indicating the scale of the composition and in pointing out opening devices" (*PSS* 8: 301). Tolstoy shares with us how he as a teacher has tried many different approaches in setting compositions and none of them really worked until he quite inadvertently has hit upon the right method. This method consisted in writing a theme based on a proverb as in Tolstoy's opinion Russian proverbs are

extremely evocative and stimulating in terms of imagining characters and their clashes, suggested by the meaning of the proverb. So Tolstoy sets a task for his pupils to write a story around the proverb "he feeds you with a spoon and pokes you in the eye with the handle" and describes to us how the two most gifted boys Syomka and Fed'ka cope with this writing assignment:

> Syomka stood out immediately for his clear-cut artistry of description, and Fed'ka, for the rightness of his poetical ideas and particularly for the warmth and swiftness of his imagination. Syomka distinguished himself particularly in fixing an artistic detail by means of language: "the truest details came pouring forth one after another. The only thing that one might reproach him with was that these details depicted only the present moment, without any connection with the general feeling of the story… Fed'ka on the other hand saw only those details which called forth in him the feeling with which he regarded a particular character… Syomka needed predominantly objective images: the bast shoes, the ragged overcoat, the old man, the woman, almost unconnected with one another; Fed'ka needed to call forth the feeling of pity in which he was himself steeped." From this description it becomes quite clear that in these boys Tolstoy sees the incarnation of the two artistic methods the tension between the two of which defines his own creative work. "It seemed as though Syomka was seeing and describing things which were present before his eyes; the stiff, frozen bast shoes and the mud which flowed from them when they were thawed out, and the dry shells they turned into when the woman threw them into the stove… Fed'ka saw the snow which had got inside the old man's foot-rags and the feeling of sympathy with which the peasant said 'Lord! How was he walking in those!' (Fed'ka even demonstrated how the peasant said this, spreading his arms and shaking his head.) He saw the old overcoat put together out of a bundle of rags and the torn shirt which could be seen, the old man's thin body wet with melting snow; he invented the wife who grumblingly, at her husband's command, took off his shoes, and the old man's pitiful groan as he said through his teeth: 'Gently missus, I've got sores there.' …He kept rushing ahead and talking about how they would feed the old man, how one night he would fall down, how later in the fields he would teach the boy to read and write, so that I was obliged to ask him not to hurry and not to forget what he had said. His eyes were glistening, almost with tears; his black, thin little hands clenched convulsively; he grew angry with me and was constantly urging me on: 'Have you written that? Have you written that?' he kept asking me. He behaved towards all the others with despotic wrath, he wanted to speak by himself – and not to speak in the way that people retell stories, but as they write, i.e. to fix the images of his feeling artistically by means of words; he would not permit me, for instance, to rearrange the words; if he said 'I've got sores on my feet' then he would not permit me to say 'there are sores on my feet.' His soul which was touched and agitated at that moment by a feeling of pity, that is of love, enveloped every image in an artistic form and rejected everything which did not correspond to the idea of eternal beauty and harmony. As soon as Syomka got carried away into blurting out disproportionate details about lambs in the stable and so on, Fed'ka grew angry and said: 'Now, now, you! Quit harping on it!' …The main characteristic of any art – the sense of measure – was developed in him extraordinarily. A superfluous touch suggested by one of the boys jarred upon him. He took over the

> construction of the story so despotically, and with a right to that despotism, that soon the boys went home and he was left with Syomka alone, who did not yield to him, although he was working in a different mode. We worked from seven o'clock till eleven; they felt neither hunger nor fatigue…" (*PSS* 8: 304-305)

We can see from this account that Tolstoy is especially taken with Fed'ka's manner of writing as an ideal to which the writer himself is striving in the effort to overcome the minuteness of his own descriptions. Fed'ka's rebuke 'now, now, you! Quit harping on it!' is the same one that Tolstoy undoubtedly made many times for himself and the one that has been frequently repeated by his critics. Druzhinin for example spoke about excessive details in *The Snowstorm,* and Botkin wrote the following to Fet about *War and Peace*: 'despite the fact that I have read more than half, the line of the novel is not becoming clear, and up to this point only details prevail… No matter how exceptional the treatment of the minute details, it is impossible not to mention that this background occupies too much space." The general opinion concerning *War and Peace* was that Tolstoy dissipated himself on minute details not connected by any common idea. This opinion was also repeated in connection with *Anna Karenina* and as late as Tolstoy's people's stories when he once and for all abandoned his old style and started to write in Fed'ka's manner having fulfilled his dream that he had expressed in the same essay in 1862: "In the realm of unrealizable dreams I always envision a series of tales or else scenes written on proverbs" (*PSS* 8: 302). Thus the tale "He feeds you with a spoon and pokes you in the eye with the handle" that was published in the appendix to the fourth issue of *The Yasnaya Polyana Journal* can be considered an embryo for Tolstoy's future tales in the folk style.

When Tolstoy started his literary experiment with Fed'ka and Syomka he apparently did not expect such a stunning effect, though perhaps secretly hoped for it. He confesses the following:

> I cannot convey the feeling of excitement, joy, fear and almost repentance which I experienced in the course of that evening. I felt that from that day onwards a new world of delights and sufferings had opened for him – the world of art; it seemed as though I had been prying into something which no one ever has the right to see, the birth of the mysterious flower of poetry. I felt both fear and joy, like a treasure-seeker who should see a flower upon a fern; I was joyful because suddenly, quite unexpectedly, the philosopher's stone which I had been seeking in vain for two years was revealed to me – the art of teaching how to express thoughts… There was no mistaking it. It was not chance, but conscious creativity." (*PSS* 8: 305-306)

These emotional words would have sounded strange in the context of an ordinary pedagogical article, but they perfectly characterize the essence of Tolstoy's pamphlet precisely because it is a hybrid of the belletristic and essayistic genres. In these words we hear not only the joy of a teacher who through creative experimentation has discovered an effective teaching tool, but also a triumphant cry of Tolstoy the writer who found the treasure of conscious creativity in the unspoiled child's nature – the fact that validates all of his earlier interrupted literary pursuits and empowers him to return to writing again. Pointing to the artistic merits of the story, Tolstoy exclaims: 'all of this is highly intentional, in all the touches can be felt such a conscious power of an artist!' At the same time Tolstoy is almost frightened by the results of his experiment, it seems to him that he has gone too far; he describes his agitation and embarrassment in sexual terms giving it especially profound and somewhat eerie meaning:

> Dimly it seemed that I had been guilty of criminal prying through a glass beehive into the work of the bees which is concealed from mortal gaze; it seemed to me that I had

> corrupted the pure primitive soul of a peasant child. I dimly sensed in myself repentance for some sort of sacrilege. I was reminded of the children who are forced by idle and corrupt old men to mince and present sensuous scenes in order to rekindle their weary and jaded imaginations, and yet I was overjoyed, as a man should be who has seen things which no one ever saw before. (*PSS* 8: 307-308)

Having convinced himself first hand in the existence of the "mysterious flower of poetry", Tolstoy still doubts his senses but at the same time foresees the impact that this experiment will have on his future: "For a long time I could not account for this impression which I had received, although I felt that this was one of those impressions which educate a man in his mature years, which raise him to a new level of life and force him to renounce the old and devote himself entirely to the new" (*PSS* 8: 308). It is evident from these words that Tolstoy has already started to prepare his retreat from pedagogical activities and transitioning back to creative writing.

The manuscript of the story co-authored by Makarov, Morozov and Tolstoy accidentally was turned into a paper banger and burnt in a stove. Tolstoy was inconsolable about the loss and commented in the essay: "I have never felt any loss so hard as the loss of those three closely-written sheets; I was in despair." Then follows an outstanding description – one of the best ever written by Tolstoy on the process of creative work and nature of poetical inspiration – a passage that could easily compete with some of the most unforgettable narrations from Tolstoy's earlier aesthetically charged works such as "Albert," *The Notes from Lucerne* and *Family Happiness.* Tolstoy describes how Fed'ka ad Syomka decided to recreate the perished in the fire story and,

having come to his house in the evening, locked themselves up in his study and immersed in creative work:

> Between eleven and twelve o'clock I knocked at their door and went in. Fed'ka, in a new white fur coat trimmed with black, was sitting in the depths of an armchair with one leg crossed upon the other, his shaggy young head propped on his hand and playing with a pair of scissors in the other hand. His large black eyes, shinning with an unnatural but serious and adult glitter were staring somewhere into the distance; his irregular lips, pursed as if he were about to whistle, were obviously in the act of forming a word which, his imagination having hit upon it, he was about to utter. Syomka, standing in front of the large writing-table, with a large white fragment of sheepskin on his back (tailors had only just come to the village), with loosened sash and disheveled head, was writing on the crooked lines, constantly stubbing the pen into the inkwell. I rumpled Syomka's hair and as he looked at me, startled, with puzzled sleepy eyes, his plump high-boned face with its straying hair was so funny that I started to chuckle, but the children did not start laughing. Fed'ka, without altering the expression on his face, touched Syomka's sleeve, meaning that he should go on writing: 'Wait a minute you,' he said to me presently (Fed'ka talks to me like that when he is absorbed and excited), and he dictated a bit more. I took the note-book from them, and five minutes later when, seated around the little cupboard, they were consuming potatoes and kvass by turns, looking at the silver spoons, which were marvelous in their eyes, they burst out, without knowing why themselves, into ringing childish laughter; the old woman listening to them upstairs also laughed without knowing why. 'What are you laughing for?' said Syomka, 'sit up staright or else you'll be filled up lopsided.' And they took off their fur coats and stretched out underneath the writing table to sleep they could not stop their outbursts of childish, peasant, healthy, enchanting laughter. (*PSS* 8: 309-310)

The above description certainly takes the form of a certain poetical myth under Tolstoy's pen: Fed'ka with his glittering eyes and the lips harboring the word carefully prepared by his imagination is transformed from a simple peasant boy and a school pupil into a poet who is heeding the whispering of the Muse, or perhaps the Muse herself who inspires Syomka. There is certainly a feeling of a slight poetic embellishment about the whole scene and we may doubt the accuracy with which Tolstoy reproduced the facts for us. These doubts are supported by the reminiscences of Vasiliy Morozov, a former pupil of the Yasnaya Polyana school and the actual prototype of Fed'ka who confirms in his

notes the very episode that Tolstoy describes in his essay but recalls it in a slightly different light:

> I undertook the task of restoring the lost essay and to rewrite it exactly the way it was. We stayed overnight at Lev Nikolaevich's house and got down to work with Makarov. The rewriting was not turning out well for us. Makarov and I were arguing and both of us were forgetting the essence of the story. We finished writing but not as well as the first time and Lev Nikolaevich had always regretted the loss. (*Tolstoy v vospominaniakh sovremennikov* 1: 146-147)

However, despite some obvious artistic exaggeration the fact remains and it apparently had left a lasting and positive impression in the memory of one of Tolstoy's best students Vasiliy Morozov who reproduced it almost sixty years later in his reminiscences about Lev Nikolaevich. In these recollections he speaks with particular warmth and gratitude about their closeness with Tolstoy that the students experienced during these exercises in creative writing. Besides Tolstoy with the help of his students and his exciting educational endeavor manages to purge his own creative fears and to overcome the trauma of the epoch caused by the political and generational clash. Henceforth Tolstoy's study is once again sanctified by the presence of the Muse and what is more important in its childlike, pure form. Gradually he is starting to depart from the school that "has formed" him anew and returns to literature. In October of 1862 Tolstoy wrote the following to his sister-in-law Elizaveta Andreevna Bers: "To tell the truth, my little journal is starting to burden me, especially its obligatory conditions such as students, proofs etc. And I am really drawn right now to free prolonged work – a novel or something of this kind" (*PSS* 60: 451). Thus the question that Tolstoy had before him at the end of the 50s about the possibility of his return to literature and creative work has

been positively resolved with the help of the pedagogical medium. The essay "Should We Teach the Peasant Children to Write…" was written in October of 1862, exactly at time when Tolstoy confessed in his letter to Elizaveta Bers that he "was drawn to free prolonged work"; by the end of the same year he puts the finishing touches on *The Cossacks*, then finishes *Polikushka*, writes *Strider: The Story of a Horse*, in the autumn of 1863 he begins his work on *The Decembrists*, writes a comedy play *The Infected Family* and finally takes up *War and Peace.* Thus the essay becomes an original summary for Tolstoy's pedagogical interlude and a smooth transition to his new period of creative literary work.

CHERNYSHEVSKY'S PUBLIC REBUKE OF TOLSTOY'S PEDAGOGY

In closing of this chapter it would beneficial for us to take one more diversion into the question of acceptance or to be precise rejection of Tolstoy's pedagogical ideas by his major polemicist of the period Chernyshevsky - the man who has earlier won the battle over *The Contemporary* and managed to oust the members of the older generation including a younger Tolstoy from the editorial board. The question of how important it was for Tolstoy to enlist Chernyshevsky's support for his pedagogical endeavor is elicited by the letter that Tolstoy wrote to his adversary with the request of his sincere and serious review on the first issue of *The Yasnaya Polyana Journal*. This short letter is the only existing message between the two men of letters as they had not been in correspondence previously. This is the first and the last letter written by Tolstoy to Chernyshevsky; it fully reflects their complicated and conflicting relationship, confirming

at the same time the importance of Chernyshevsky's critical opinion for Tolstoy, especially on the matters of public education. Here is the full text of the letter written on February 6 1862:

> Dear Sir Nikolai Gavrilovich! Yesterday came out the first number of my journal. I would really ask you to read it carefully and express your sincere and serious opinion about it in *The Contemporary*. I had a misfortune to write novels and the public without reading it would be saying: "Oh yes… *Childhood* is very nice, but a journal?.." But the journal and the whole matter is everything to me. Send your response to Tula. (*Perepiska s russkimi pisateliami* 2: 148)

Chernyshevsky responded to Tolstoy's request with a scathing article in *The Contemporary* (1863, Issue 3) where he lambasted theoretical views of the writer. The review is written with great caution in regards to Tolstoy's pedagogical enterprise itself, he salutes Tolstoy's respectful system of treatment of his students and gives a positive opinion of his practical teaching methods, however polemicizing bitterly with the theoretical ideas in Tolstoy's pedagogical journal. The end of the review is filled with the ample number of caustic remarks concerning the oddities and general contradictions of Tolstoy's view of people and their education. Chernyshevsky compares Tolstoy to a half-educated assessor of a country court, a very kind and honest person who took it to his mind to be a law maker without having either a law degree or the familiarity with the general character of the contemporary views: "You resemble him very much: decide for yourself either to stop writing theoretical articles or to study in order to be able to write them." Chernyshevsky accepted Tolstoy's challenge – his review was written in a sincere and serious manner but Tolstoy's ideas and his pedagogical radicalism were made an object of derision. Practically speaking, it was a crushing verdict which was aimed at

the most tender spot – Chernyshevsky was reprimanding Tolstoy, publicly scolding him as a teacher would scold a negligent pupil:

> …before you begin to teach Russia your pedagogical wisdom, you should study yourself, you should contemplate and try to acquire a more definite and coherent view on the matter of public education. Your feelings are noble, your strivings are beautiful; this might be enough for your personal practical activities: you do not beat your students in your school, do not scold them, on the contrary, you are kind to the children – this is good. But the deduction of the general principles of a science requires also another thing besides the beautiful feelings: one should stand on the level with the science and not be satisfied with some personal observations and random reading of some articles. …Some people, considering themselves very intelligent and inclined to consider all other people like Rousseau and Pestalozzi foolish, undertook the publication of a pedagogical journal; the people who have certain personal experience but who have neither defined general convictions nor a scientific education. With these qualities they started reading pedagogical books – to read attentively and to the end they do not consider necessary – this, they say, is all written nonsense and before us nobody understood anything in the matter of public education. …But something they nevertheless read and remembered, and the scraps of other people's thoughts that got caught in their memory are flying off their tongue disorderly, in random connection with each other and with their personal impressions. From all this, naturally, originates chaos. (Chernyshevsky, *PSS* 10: 514-515)

From the cited excerpt it is quite apparent that the reconciliation or at least a compromise between the two opposing literary camps was not possible even over a seemingly common cause of the education for the people. If Tolstoy was hoping to impress *The Contemporary* with his innovative pedagogical ideas and to make them change their attitude - he was mistaken. Chernyshevsky was obviously only too anxious to prove Tolstoy's ignorance in the matter, dragging up the fact that he did not have a proper university degree, was shocked that Tolstoy did not take more seriously such figures as Froebel and Pestalozzi, and took the view common to urban radicals, that members of the aristocracy had no business to be on the side of the peasants unless they learnt from the intelligentsia how to cultivate the right attitudes. Chernyshevsky's review written in a moralizing and derisive tone caused the highest level of irritation in Tolstoy

which found its expression in his next article "On Upbringing and Education". It was written in a much more firm and resolute tone and was openly directed against the claims to the absolute truth of the new intelligentsia and against the propaganda of their new ideas.

It is easy to be dismissive of Tolstoy's volatile temperament and to ignore or belittle the extraordinary energy which he expended on his school in the three brief years of its existence and the provocative power of his educational theory and practice as displayed in his journal. However, it would be hard to argue with the fact that Tolstoy's pedagogical ambition was nothing less than a reconstruction, almost a reinvention, of the science of education. This reconstruction was to be effected by means of a systematic study of the free child, his intellectual environment, his social relationships, his developing thought and action. It was a study which would embrace the organization, methods and curricula of schools in their social context, the interrelationships of adults and children, learners and teachers, the nature of knowledge and the means of intellectual growth. This pedagogical interlude that seemed to many at the end of the 50s as a simple manifestation of Tolstoy's first serious creative crisis, turned out to be one of the most productive, inspiring and experimental periods in the writer's career, precipitating the conception of his greatest, most encompassing work *War and Peace.* Several important creative products resulted from this period of Tolstoy's passionate and enthusiastic preoccupation with the cause of public education, among them the *Primer* which can be considered one of the most creative and complete teaching materials of this kind at the

time, his novel *The Cossacks* and a short story "Polikushka" as well as another very important unfinished novel *The Decembrists*, which eventually became a direct source for *War and Peace.* In connection with his work on the *Primer* Tolstoy experimented not only with various literary genres but also with the language. He developed a new clear-cut and unadorned style of expression for writing the articles and short stories in his *Primer,* which became his etalon language he would strive for in his later creative work. As a reading supplement to his *Primer* Tolstoy created a whole body of transitional literature for people which did not exist at the time and can be considered one of his greatest achievements for the advancement of public education. Tolstoy's original and radical approach to some leading pedagogical theories of the time, his desire to allow each child to develop as an individual anticipated a lot of 20th century educational theory.

Certainly, we could criticize Tolstoy, as Chernyshevsky did, for the lack of a more in-depth or systematic knowledge of the pedagogical theory and perhaps some of the contradictory views expressed in his essays, but we could not possibly deny him the knowledge of people's nature, their educational needs and his genuine concern for the state of public education. His stimulating literary pamphlets on the theory and practical methodology of pedagogy are still extremely topical nowadays and offer to modern educators a great deal of psychological insight as well as practical teaching tools for a wide spectrum of subjects ranging from composition and language to music, geography and mathematics. Indeed, few of the great issues which Tolstoy raises have yet been resolved and many are little nearer to resolution than when they were when he wrote and

taught. Universal literacy, in any but the most mechanical sense that Tolstoy so savagely derided, remains an aspiration rather than an achievement, while the cultural renaissance which he foresaw as the consequence of a genuinely popular education is still no more than a dream. The continuing vitality of these essays lies in the clarity of their concern for what are still the fundamental problems of popular education, and in the boldness of their attempted solutions.

As if attesting to the enduring artistic, not only educational value of these works, Isaiah Berlin in his essay "Tolstoy and Enlightenment" calls them "one of the most extraordinary performances in the history of literature." This is what he has to say about a captivating and intricate fusion of Tolstoy's direct vision of human experience and firm dogmas that the writer creates in his educational pamphlets:

> His overriding didactic purpose is easily forgotten in the unrivalled insight into the twisting, criss-crossing pattern of the thoughts and feelings of individual village children, and the marvelous concreteness and imagination with which their talk and behavior, and physical nature round them are described. And side by side with this direct vision of human experience, there run the clear, firm dogmas of a fanatically doctrinaire eighteenth-century rationalist – doctrines not fused with the life that he describes, but superimposed upon it, like windows with rigorously symmetrical patterns drawn upon them, unrelated to the world on which they open, and yet achieving a kind of illusory artistic and intellectual unity with it, owing to the unbounded vitality and constructive genius of the writing itself. (Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* 246)

Tolstoy's romance with public education was though a fleeting but a meaningful one. It not only gave birth to Tolstoy's daring and life-rooted pedagogical approaches, but also helped the writer to purge his creative powers through the pedagogical medium and returned him to the world of belles-lettres. Tolstoy married in the fall of 1862, and shortly after that he announced his decision to stop the publication of his journal and to

abandon his school. In March of 1863 there was published the last 12th issue of *The Yasnaya Polyana Journal* with the article "Progress and the Definition of Education", and in the fall of 1863 Tolstoy was writing to his confidante, the countess Alexandra Tolstoy:

> You will recognize my handwriting and my signature; but you are probably wondering who I am and what sort of a person I am now. I am a husband and a father, who is fully satisfied with his situation, and I am getting so used to it, that in order to be aware of my happiness, I have to think what it would be like without it… I have never felt my intellectual powers, and even all my moral powers so free and so capable of work. And I have work to do. This work is a novel of the 1810s and 1820s, which has been occupying me completely since the autumn. Does this prove weakness of character or strength? I sometimes think both – but I must confess that my views on life, on the people and on society are now completely different from what they were the last time we saw each other. They can be pitied, but it is difficult for me to understand how I could have loved them so deeply. Nevertheless, I am very glad that I passed through this school – this last mistress of mine has formed me greatly. I love children and pedagogy, but it is hard for me to understand myself as I was a year ago. The children come to me in the evenings and bring with them memories for me of the teacher that used to be in me and is there no longer. I am now a writer with all the strength of my soul, and I write and think it over like I have never written and thought before. I am a happy and tranquil husband and father who has no secrets from anyone and no desires, except that everything would go on as before. (*Perepiska s gr. A. A. Tolstoy* 192)

So the circle has been completed – family happiness, fatherhood and literature – these are the dominants of Tolstoy's life by 1863. One phrase from this letter though is rather significant in itself and indicative of the whole five-year pedagogical interlude: *"nevertheless, I am very glad that I passed through this school."* It turns out that the Yasnaya Polyana school was a school not so much for peasant children as for Tolstoy himself – it was a "great formative influence" on him, i.e. it helped him to filter his convictions and creative ideas, prove again to others and most importantly to himself the existence of aesthetic needs in the human system of values, the basic need for conscious creativity, which validated his earlier literary period and returned him to writing. Thus, the significance of this five-year period in Tolstoy's creative trajectory can scarcely be

exaggerated, as all the factors listed above endower it with not only literary but also truly historical meaning.

Chapter V: The Echo of the Pedagogical Interlude in War and Peace

CREATIVE HISTORY OF THE TEXT

In the previous chapter I attempted to trace Tolstoy's enthusiastic and passionate participation in the 1860s educational movements that were on the rise at the time of the Great Reforms. I found some strong evidence in the writer's creative pedagogical activities and his educational writings supporting my hypothesis that Tolstoy's pedagogical works form an important link to his fiction, and should not be viewed as a digression from his development as a writer, but as an integral part of it. The school at Yasnaya Polyana became a testing ground not only for Tolstoy's pedagogical theories but also for his creative ideas, which he checked against his students' perception. It has been demonstrated that even in the midst of his educational efforts Tolstoy never completely abandoned creative writing finishing his novel *The Cossacks* in 1862 – a tale which he had started ten years earlier, and a short story "Polikushka", as well as conceiving "The Strider" which he would finish only twenty years later. And in the depths of the pedagogical interlude throughout all this seemingly unrelated work was slowly but inevitably emerging the most important concept - another novel *The Decembrists,* which though unfinished, eventually became a direct source for *War and Peace*. In February 1863 Sofya Andreevna Tolstaya would write to her sister Tatiana: "Liova has started a new novel." This was the beginning of a new book which would become a result of "seven years of continuous and exclusive work in the best conditions of life." The book which would encompass years of historical research ("a whole library of books") and family legends, the tragic experience of the Sebastopol bastions and the minute details of

the Yasnaya Polyana every day life, and the philosophical and moral problems touched upon in earlier works such as *Childhood, The Notes from Lucerne, Family Happiness, Sebastopol Stories* and *The Cossacks.*

There exists a widely known legend that Sofya Andreevna Tolstaya had to recopy six or seven times the manuscripts of *War and Peace,* i. e. Tolstoy had to rewrite the novel the same number of times. The numerous research that exists on the novel has proven the erroneous nature of this supposition. The book was not rewritten every time anew from the first to the last line. Some fragments or even chapters would be completed at first try, others required tens of variants, but on the whole it was a titanic work. "I innumerable number of times began and gave up writing that story from 1812…" – Tolstoy would note in the draft of the Introduction to *War and Peace.* "God only knows what you are doing! This way we will never be done with editing and printing" – complained the publisher of the novel Bartenev. "Not to correct the way I correct, - the writer answered, - I cannot, and I am convinced that all this correcting is greatly beneficial… That version that you like would have been much worse if it had not been corrected about five times" (*PSS* 61: 176).

In 1870 when the book was already finished Tolstoy formulated his major creative principle in a letter written to life-long friend Afanasiy Fet, in which he shared the concept of a new, never to be completed novel about Peter I: "I am agonizing over my work. You cannot even imagine how hard it comes to me this preliminary work of deep plowing of the field, on which I have to sow. To think over and rethink everything that

might happen with the future people of the conceived work, a large one, and to think over millions of possible combinations in order to choose one out of a million is awfully hard. And that is what I am occupied with right now (*PSS* 61: 240). And five years earlier, in the heat of his work on *War and Peace* he ecstatically wrote to the same friend: "Nevertheless, this realization that I can constitutes happiness for the people of our kind. You are familiar with this feeling. This year I am experiencing it especially strong (*PSS* 61: 125).

The 1860s passed in the atmosphere of the "agonizing and happy" work accompanied by "the best conditions of life." Along with the changing and growing concept of the novel, Tolstoy was searching for the appropriate title for his evolving epic. The initial title *Three Epochs* soon ceased to be relevant to the content, as from the years of 1856 and 1825 the author traveled deeper into the past, and only one epoch of 1812 eventually became the center and the background of the narration. Thus the date was changed and the first chapters of the novel were published in the journal *The Russian Herald* under the title *The year of 1805.* In 1866 there appeared another variant of the title, not purely historical but rather in the vein of an English family novel: *All's Well That Ends Well.* And finally, in 1867 was found a new title borrowed from Proudhon and emphasizing the philosophical-historical and epic genre of Tolstoy's work – *War and Peace.*

The first three volumes of *War and Peace* were published in December of 1867, then followed volume four in March of 1868, volume five in February of 1869 and finally

the last sixth volume saw publication in December of 1869. This process of publishing the novel did not give Tolstoy the opportunity to rework the earlier parts so that they would correspond to what the later parts were becoming. Only the journal text of *The Russian Herald* was subjected to a certain amount of reworking when it was published as a separate addition. A full edition of the text was never done, as a result we have before us a striking fact: there is no obvious, definitive, "canonical" text of *War and Peace* – there is not a single analogous example in the history of Russian literature. Next editions underwent certain compositional changes: the most important change concerning the structure of the novel was the division of the text into four volumes instead of the original six that was done in the third edition in 1873 and repeated in the 1886 fifth edition.[1] By then thirteen years had passed from the time of the conception of the novel, and the publication of it stretched out for two years. The critics started their war over *War and Peace* immediately after the appearance of the first chapters of the book in *The Russian Herald*, not waiting for the completion of the novel. In the history of Russian literature perhaps only one more book - Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin* – had a similar literary fate. While it was being written, readers had lived along with it for several years, trying to predict the fate of their favorite characters, making assumptions about their prototypes, welcomed and protested against it, and died without having found out "in what way did their story end" (as Mayakovsky said about *Anna Karenina*). The creative history of *War and Peace* was merging with the history of its contemporary reception. The novel

[1] For more detailed exposition on the history of the text see Zaidenshnur, E. *Voina i mir L. N. Tolstogo. Sozdanie velikoi knigi*. Moscow, 1966.; and Gusev, N. *Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy. Materialy k biografii s 1855 po 1869 god.* Moscow, 1957 (693-812).

was evolving and growing right before the eyes of the reading public and literary critics, but it is another question which does not lie within the tasks of the present chapter, whether they were prepared for the meeting.

PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP OVERVIEW

A small library of critical scholarship, both Russian and Western, has been written about *War and Peace* and more should be expected, considering the rising present-day interest in Tolstoy as a writer, philosopher and pedagogue. Some of the most influential works that should be mentioned here as this research draws on their findings, include Boris Eikhenbaum *Tolstoy in the Sixties*, Isaiah Berlin *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, P. Annenkov "Istoricheskie i esteticheskie voprosy v romane gr. L. N. Tolstogo "Voina i mir", R. Gustafson *Leo Tolstoy: Resident and Stranger,* N. Strakhov *Kriticheskie statii ob I. S. Turgeneve i L. N. Tolstom*, G. Morson *Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in War and Peace*, S. Bocharov *Roman L. Tolstogo "Voina i mir",* Henry James *The Tragic Muse,* V. Shklovsky *Lev Tolstoy*, L. Ginzburg , *O psikhologicheskoi proze*, E. Kupriyanova *O problematike i zhanrovoi prirode romana L.Tolstogo "Voina i mir"*, Donna Orwin *Tolstoy's Art and Thought, 1847-1880*, V. Vinogradov *O iazyke Tolstogo (50-60-e gody)*, Ya. Bilinkis *O tvorchestve L. Tolstogo.*

Most of the above mentioned research deals with a wide range of problems traditionally discussed in connection with *War and Peace*, such as the problem of its genre definition, the tension between the family and historic-philosophical planes of the novel, the sources and ideas in the historic-philosophical and military-theoretical

chapters, the Western and Slavophile sources of the novel, the unique literary history of the text, the psychologism of Tolstoy's prose and the dialectical nature of his characters, the character prototypes in the novel, the portrayal of nature and history in the novel, the comparative analyses of the family types etc. All these questions have been given a detailed and careful examination by literary critics and Tolstoy scholars since the first publication of the novel. However, surprisingly little has been written in connection with Tolstoy's pedagogical ideas and their reflections in his epic novel. Only several books have been dedicated to the writer's educational philosophy in general, among them is a recently published book by an Oxford researcher Daniel Moulin *The Continuum Library of Educational Thought*[2], an introduction by M. Armstrong in *Tolstoy on Education: Tolstoy's Educational writings 1861-1862*[3], E. Crosby *Tolstoy as Schoolmaster*, an introduction by B. Blaisdell in *Tolstoy as Teacher: Leo Tolstoy's Writings on Education*, as well as several articles that were written on the topic such as I. Berlin "Tolstoy and Enlightenment" in *Russian Thinkers*, R. Edwards "Tolstoy and John Dewey: Pragmatism and Prosaics" in *Tolstoy Studies Journal*, A. Cohen "The Educational Philosophy of Tolstoy" in *Oxford Review of Education* and an essay by E. Mossman "Tolstoy and peasant learning in the era of the Great Reforms" in *School and Society in Tsarist and Soviet Russia.*

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[2] The book gives a critical exposition of Tolstoy's educational thought and helps us see Tolstoy as a significant educational philosopher. The author attempts to reevaluate Tolstoy's pedagogical thought which in his opinion was presented in a distorted light to the Western reader.

[3] In his commentary introducing an anthology of the translations of Tolstoy's early pedagogic writings, the author gives particular attention to the whole relationship Tolstoy envisaged between teacher and learner, to his curricular policies, his attitudes to matters such as motivation and discipline.

Taking into consideration the obvious lack of research concerning Tolstoy's educational thought and his considerable contribution to the field of practical and theoretical pedagogy, as well as a general tendency to view his pedagogical writings outside the context of his creative work, I would like to focus the main attention of this chapter on the task of identifying thematic links between Tolstoy's educational writings and his most encompassing fictional work – *War and Peace*. By means of locating his main educational ideas and premises in the context of this monumental epic novel, I will try to illuminate their meaning more clearly as filtered through the prism of Tolstoy's creative thought in order to demonstrate to what extent Tolstoy's educational ideas informed his creative writings. In continuation with the ideas developed in the previous chapter, I would like to show the integrity of all of Tolstoy's interests – artistic, pedagogic, philosophic, religious and socio-political, because in order to grasp the full importance of Tolstoy's educational writings, it is essential to view them within the frame of his work as a whole and to be able to define the nature of their relationship to all his other writings. Tolstoy himself conceived the role of the artist as having a distinct educational purpose. After his deep preoccupation with the aesthetic ideas of the 1850's in the wake of his literary career, Tolstoy eventually rejected the idea of art for art's sake, and consistently maintained that its purpose is the revelation of truth, and to that degree he saw it as serving a purpose analogous to that which he sought to fulfill through his formal educational activities.

All the central principles of Tolstoy's educational thought such as his pedagogy of freedom, his ideas of aesthetic education through reading, art and music, his religious and moral education as well as social and community rooted conception of education found their reflections on the pages of *War and Peace*. It will be especially beneficial for us to trace the connections between his principles of a liberating pedagogy and the fostering of the spirit of freedom as described in his Yasnaya Polyana school essays and the problems of freedom and necessity in the novel as the central problem of Tolstoy's philosophy of history. It also has its connotations in the philosophy of altruistic, communal and liberal family upbringing and education so vividly exemplified by Tolstoy through his portrayal of the Rostov family, which is juxtaposed with the high-minded however rigid, exclusive and elitist aristocratic educational trend represented by the Bolkonskys .

A HISTORY LESSON AS A SOURCE OF CREATIVE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF WAR AND PEACE

One of the most obvious connections between Tolstoy's educational writings and his epic novel is the fact documented by the writer himself in his essay "Yasnaya Polyana School in November and December" where he describes his unsuccessful attempts at giving history lessons to his peasant students, in the process of which he inadvertently conceptualizes the historical plot of *War and Peace.* Tolstoy's anti-historicism in the novel, for which he was so mercilessly criticized by many of his contemporaries and later critics, had already been previously established in his pedagogic articles, especially in "Progress and the Definition of Education" where Tolstoy polemicized bitterly with contemporary historicism and the "historical view." It was clearly illustrated in his

history lessons by facts concerning 1812. Tolstoy had no success teaching his students Russian history until he began telling them about the year 1812. The history of the medieval period turned into a parody which Tolstoy has described in the following way:

> One student began: "So he, what's-his-name, went to what-do-you-call-it?"
> A girl prompted him: "It was Muslav, wasn't it Lev Nikolaevich?"
> I answered, "It was Mstislav."
> "And smashed him on the head," one proudly said.
> "Hold on, there was a river there."
> "And his son, what's-his-name, gathered together an army and smashed him on the head."
> "You'll never get it right," said a girl who had the memory of a blind person.
> "And there's something amazing that happens too," said Syomka.
> "Well, Mislav, Chislav! The devil knows what it all means!"
> "Don't butt in if you don't know!"
> "Well you know a lot! You're really smart!"
> "Hey, what are you shoving me for?" (*PSS* 8: 93)

This was the way the children grasped the ancient period of Russian history, turning a battle between appanage princes into a brawl among themselves. As has been discussed previously in the episode of Tolstoy's conversation with his students amidst a winter forest, these students and pedagogy are certainly contrived and artistically-embellished – Tolstoy is testing his own ideas and confirming himself in his students. He was undoubtedly glad to find that they as representatives of "nature" had no need of conventional history. Of course, this is not simply a teacher's description of a lesson, it is also a parody on the history textbooks and on history itself – preparation for the well-known parody in *War and Peace.* This evokes a similar passage from *War and Peace* brilliantly realized by Tolstoy within a different creative medium of a work of fiction, nevertheless, the target of this parody and even its participants remain unchanged. Out of all passages dedicated to the debunking of the accepted historical view of events and the falsification of history by modern historians in the novel, the episode with Cossack

Lavrushka and his conversation with Napoleon depicted in a highly burlesque and comic manner by Tolstoy, comes to mind as an excellent example of the way the writer converts his teaching experiences into creative writing. In this chapter Tolstoy takes on Napoleon's historian Thiers who in the author's view represents a general misconception that befalls most historians (independent of their nationality) consisting in the fact that most of them look for the explanation of historic events in the will of one man. The passage also represents a good example of Tolstoy's use of the philosophical language, saturated with terms from mathematics, physics and analogies to the game of chess which was directed against the raznochintsy with their love for natural sciences.[4] We read in the opening of Chapter VII, Volume III of *War and Peace*:[5]

> Napoleon's historian Thiers, like other of his historians, trying to justify his hero says that he was drawn to the walls of Moscow against his will. He is as right as other historians who look for the explanation of historic events in the will of one man; he is as right as the Russian historians who maintain that Napoleon was drawn to Moscow by the skill of the Russian commanders. Here besides the law of retrospection, which regards all the past as a preparation for events that subsequently occur, the law of reciprocity comes in, confusing the whole matter. A good chessplayer having lost a game is sincerely convinced that his loss resulted from a mistake he made and looks for that mistake in the opening, but forgets that at each stage of the game there were similar mistakes and that none of his moves were perfect. He only notices the mistake to which he pays attention, because his opponent took advantage of it. How much more complex than this is the game of war, which occurs under certain limits of time, and where it is not one will that manipulates lifeless objects, but everything results from innumerable conflicts of various wills! (*PSS* 11: 130-131)

To intensify the comic effect and to highlight the disjunction between the pompous and defined discourse of historical textbooks and the real-life situations that are

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[4] As Boris Eikhenbaum notes: "All of those parallelograms of forces, squares of distances, and algebraic equations, etc., all of this "Urusovism" was being used by Tolstoy against the "realists," with their Darwinism and their striving to make history a branch of science." (*Tolstoi in the Sixties* (Ann Arbor, 1982), p. 218.

[5] All citations from the text of *War and Peace* are taken from a Norton Critical Edition of 1996 in the Maude translation.

much more complex and sometimes completely opposite to the one-sided and limited reproductions of them by historians, Tolstoy takes quotes from Thiers's historical descriptions and collides them with his burlesque description of "what has really happened." The parody is so well constructed and reaches such proportions that by the end of the chapter each reader is forced to recall similar accounts from history books and personally question their authenticity. It will be necessary to quote this passage in its entirety in order to preserve its comic effect:

> *Moscou, la capital asiatique de ce grand empire, la ville sacrée des peoples d'Alexandre, Moscou avec ses innombrables églises en forme de pagodes chinoises* [Moscow, the Asiatic capital of this great empire, the sacred city of Alexander's people, Moscow with its innumerable churches shaped like Chinese pagodas], this Moscow gave Napoleon's imagination no rest. On the march from Vyazma to Tsarevo-Zaymishche he rode his light bay bobtailed ambler accompanied by his Guards, his bodyguard, his pages, and aides-de-camp. Berthier, his chief of staff, dropped behind to question a Russian prisoner captured by the cavalry. Followed by Lelorgne d'Ideville, an interpreter, he overtook Napoleon at a gallop and reined in his horse with an amused expression.
>
> "Well?" asked Napoleon.
>
> "One of Platov's Cossacks says that Platov's corps is joining up with the main army and that Kutuzov has been appointed commander in chief. He is a very shrewd and garrulous fellow."
>
> Napoleon smiled and told them to give the Cossack a horse and bring the man to him. He wished to talk to him himself. Several adjutants galloped off, and an hour later, Lavrushka, the serf Denisov had handed over to Rostov, rode up to Napoleon in an orderly's jacket and on a French cavalry saddle, with a roguish, merry, and tipsy face. Napoleon told him to ride by his side and began questioning him.
>
> "You are a Cossack?"
>
> "Yes, a Cossack, your Honor."
>
> "Le cosaque ignorant la compagnie dans laquelle il se trouvait, car la simplicité de Napoléon n'avait rien qui pût révéler à une imagination orientale la présence d'un souverain, s'entretint avec la plus extrême familiarité des affaires de la guerre actuelle" [The Cossack, not knowing in what company he was, for Napoleon's plain appearance had nothing about it that would reveal to an Oriental mind the presence of a monarch, talked with extreme familiarity of the incidents of the war], says Thiers, narrating this episode. In reality Lavrushka, having got drunk the day before and left his master dinnerless, had been whipped and sent to the village in quest of chickens, where he engaged in looting till the French took him prisoner. Lavrushka was one of those coarse, bare-faced lackeys who have seen all sorts of things, consider it necessary to do everything in a mean ad cunning way, are ready to render any sort of service to their master, and are keen at guessing their master's baser impulses, especially those prompted by vanity and pettiness.

Finding himself in the company of Napoleon, whose identity he had easily and surely recognized, Lavrushka was not in the least abashed but merely did his utmost to gain his new master's favor.

He knew very well that this was Napoleon, but Napoleon's presence could no more intimidate him than Rostov's, or a sergeant major's with the rods, would have done, for he had nothing that either the sergeant major or Napoleon could deprive him of.

So he rattled on, telling all the gossip he had heard among the orderlies. Much of it was true. But when Napoleon asked him whether the Russians thought they would beat Bonaparte or not, Lavrushka screwed up his eyes and considered.

In this question he saw subtle cunning, as men of his type see cunning in everything, so he frowned and did not answer immediately.

"It's like this," he said thoughtfully, "if there's a battle soon, yours will win. That's right. But if three days pass, then after that, well, then that same battle will not soon be over."

Lelorgne d'Ideville smilingly interpreted this speech to Napoleon thus: "If a battle takes place within the next three days the French will win, but if later, God knows what will happen." Napoleon did not smile, though ha was evidently in high good humor, and he ordered these words to be repeated.

Lavrushka noticed this and to entertain him further, pretending not to know who Napoleon was, added:

"We know that you have Bonaparte and that he has beaten everybody in the world, but we are a different matter…" – without knowing why or how this bit of boastful patriotism slipped out at the end.

The interpreter translated these words without the last phrase, and Bonaparte smiled. "Le jeune Cosaque fit sourire son puissant interlocuteur" [The young Cossack made his mighty interlocutor smile], says Thiers. After riding a few paces in silence, Napoleon turned to Berthier and said he wished to see how the news that he was talking to the Emperor himself, to that very Emperor who had written his immortally victorios name on the Pyramids, would affect this enfant du Don [child of the Don].

The fact was accordingly conveyed to Lavrushka.

Lavrushka, understanding that this was done to perplex him and that Napoleon expected him to be frightened, to gratify his new masters promptly pretended to be astonished and awe-struck, opened his eyes wide, and assumed the expression he usually put on when taken to be whipped. "A peine l'interprète de Napoléon avait-il parlé" [As soon as Napoleon's interpreter had spoken], says Thiers, "que le Cosaque, saisi d'une sorte d'ébahissement, ne proféra plus une parole et marcha les yeux constamment attachés sur ce conquérant, don't le nom avait pénétre jussqu'à lui, à travers les steppes de l'Orient. Toute sa loquacité s'était suubitement arrêtée, pour faire place à un sentiment d'admiration naïve et silencieuse. Napoléon, après l'avoir récompensé, lui donner la liberté, comme à un oiseau qu'on rend aux champs qui l'ont vu naître [the Cossack, seized by amazement, did not utter another word, but rode on, his eyes fixed on the conqueror whose fame had reached him across the steppes of the East. All his loquacity was suddenly arrested and replaced by a naïve and silent feeling of admiration. Napoleon, after making the Cossack a present, had him set free like a bird restored to its native fields].

Napoleon rode on, dreaming of the Moscow that so appealed to his imagination, and "the bird restored to its native fields" galloped to our outposts, inventing on the way all that had not taken place but that he meant to relate to his comrades. What had really taken place he did not wish to relate because it seemed to him not worth telling. (*PSS* 11: 131-134)

Now returning to the question of the concept of the historical plot of *War and Peace*, we can clearly trace the birth of the ironic anti-historical approach that later materialized in the novel, in Tolstoy's pedagogical essay dealing with the description of a history lesson which "incidentally" has its subject-matter the year of 1812. Tolstoy states in this account that his experience teaching 1812 was particularly successful due to his "fairy-tale manner" of telling the story of the war, his "historical inaccuracy" and "grouping the events around a single character," thus these lessons acquire an important function as a testing ground for Tolstoy's expositional techniques and his philosophy of history – they become a polemic with contemporary historicism. It is here for the first time that Tolstoy voices his conviction that history can be taught successfully and be of interest only when it touches nationalistic feelings. Tolstoy also expresses an opinion that the historical interest in the main makes its appearance after the artistic interest and one can use historical tradition in order to develop and satisfy the artistic interest. It is yet another of Tolstoy's ideas in connection with his teaching experience that has an important connotation for us as it is rooted in his conception of aesthetic education, which eventually found its manifestation in *War and Peace.* Let us take a closer look at Tolstoy's teaching the history of 1812 to his peasant students. While reading it, we cannot help but feel in the presence of a creative conceptualization of the future novel:

> I have recounted the history of the Crimean campaign, the reign of the Emperor Nicholas and the history of the year 1812. All this was in an almost fairy-tale tone, which was for the most part historically untrue and grouping the events around one person. As one might expect it was the tale of the war with Napoleon which was the greatest success. This lesson has remained a memorable hour in our life. I will never forget it…
>
> I sat down and began to tell the story. As always for a couple of minutes there was scuffling and groans and shoving: some came under the benches, some on to the shoulders and knees of others, and all fell silent. …I began with Alexander I; I told them about the French Revolution, the successes of Napoleon, about his seizure of power and

the war which ended with the Peace of Tilsit. As soon as the affair got to us sounds and words of lively sympathy were heard from all sides.

'Is he going to beat us too?'

'I reckon Alexander will show him!' said somebody who knew about Alexander, but I had to disappoint them – the time has not yet come; and they were hurt by the fact that it was proposed to give him the tsar's sister in marriage and that Alexander talked to him as to an equal on the bridge.

'Just you wait!' burst out Petka with a threatening gesture.

'Well, go on, tell us! Go on!'

When Alexander did not give in to him, i.e. declared war, everyone expressed encouragement. When Napoleon and all the nations of the earth marched against us and he raised revolt amongst the Germans and in Poland everyone was frozen with excitement.

A German, a friend of mine, was standing in the room.

'Ah, and you're on to us too,' said Petka (the best story-teller) to him.

'Shut up now,' shouted others.

The retreat of our troops tormented the listeners, so that from all sides they were asking for explanations why, and cursing Kutuzov and Barclay.

'Your Kutuzov's rotten.'

'You wait,' said another.

'But what did he give in for?' asked a third.

When the battle of Borodino came, and when at the end of it I was obliged to say that still we did not win, I felt sorry for them: you could see that I was dealing them all a deadly blow.

'If we didn't get it at least they didn't.'

When Napoleon arrived in Moscow and waited for the keys and bows of submission they all thundered out their feeling of defiance. The fire of Moscow was of course approved. At last began the triumph – the retreat.

'As soon as he quitted Moscow Kutuzov pursued him and began to strike,' I said.

'Clouted him!' Fedka, who was sitting opposite me, corrected me, red all over, and twisting his slender black fingers with excitement. It is a habit of his. Hardly had he said this than the whole room started roaring with proud delight. One of the little ones was smothered at the back, and nobody noticed.

'That's better! There are your keys for you!' and so on.

Then I continued about how we drove the French on. The pupils were pained to hear that someone was too late at the Berezina, and we let him get away. Petka even grunted: 'I would have shot him, the son of a bitch, for being late!'

Then we felt a little sorry even for the frozen Frenchmen. Then, when we had crossed the frontier and the Germans, who had been against us, came over to our side, somebody remembered the German who was standing in the room.

'Hey, you, so that's how it is! First you come at us, and then, when you're not strong enough, you start being with us? And suddenly they all got up and started to exclaim at the German, so that you could hear the din in the street. When they calmed down I continued about how we escorted Napoleon to Paris, placed the real king on the throne, triumphed and feasted. Only remembrance of the Crimean War marred the whole affair for us.

'Just wait,' exclaimed Petka shaking his fists, 'just let me grow up and I'll give it to 'em!' If we had been on the Shevardinsky Redoubt or Malakhov hill just then we would have repulsed them.

It was late by the time I finished. Usually the children are asleep by that time. No one was asleep; even the cuckoos' eyes were glowing. As soon as I stood up Taraska, to our

> great astonishment, crept out from under my chair and looked at me excitedly and yet seriously.
> 'How did you creep in there?'
> 'He was there from the very beginning,' someone said.
> There was no need to ask whether he had understood; you could see it in his face.
> 'Well, will you retell it?' I asked.
> 'Me?' He thought for a bit. 'I shall retell all of it.'
> 'I shall tell it at home.'
> 'And so shall I.'
> 'And me.'
> 'Won't there be any more?'
> 'No.'
> And they all flew down the stairs, some promising to show the French, some reproaching the German and some repeating how Kutuzov had clouted him.
> 'Sie haben ganz russisch erzählt' (You told it in a very Russian way) said the German who had been exclaimed at to me in the evening. 'You should hear how completely differently we tell the story. You didn't say anything about the German struggles for freedom.' (Sie haben nichts gesagt von den deutschen Freiheitskämpfen.)
> I entirely agreed with him that my narrative was not history but a tale which aroused national feeling.[6] (*PSS* 8: 100-103)

And so, *War and Peace*, based more on "historical legend" than on documents, "historically inaccurate," a "fairy tale arousing national feeling," and consciously opposed to scientific historical descriptions, was already prepared in this lesson which Tolstoy really never forgot.

THE CHILDHOOD ROOTS OF TOLSTOY'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

To a considerable degree we can identify the roots of Tolstoy's educational philosophy in the experiences of his childhood and youth. The impressions that he formed of the educational process as a young pupil and then as a university student were vividly depicted by Tolstoy in his autobiographical trilogy *Childhood, Adolescence, Youth*, where he presented us with two contrasting images of his educators. A kind,

[6] English quotations of Tolstoy's pedagogical articles cited in this chapter are taken from Pinch, A., and M. Armstrong, ed. Trans. A. Pinch. *Tolstoy on Education: Tolstoy's Educational Writings 1861-62.* New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson, 1982.

warm, good-natured and slightly eccentric Karl Ivanych (a literary prototype of Tolstoy's first tutor Fyodor Ivanovich Rossel) and an authoritarian and stern St. Jerome (Prosper de St. Thomas). These two images provide us with a valuable insight into the learning conditions that eventually shaped Tolstoy's vision of education and especially his understanding of the role and mission of the teacher. From the first pages of the book it becomes clear to us what kind of teacher-student relationship Tolstoy considers ideal and productive. The conditions created by Karl Ivanych are organic and conducive to effective learning as well as to childhood freedom and happiness. He is an encouraging and caring type of teacher who is extremely successful at releasing and nurturing Tolstoy's creative potential. It is apparent also that Karl Ivanych rejects the principles of theoretical pedagogy and bases his teaching style on direct observation of the needs of individual children, which is exactly the teaching style that Tolstoy propagated so vehemently in his educational writings. One of the dominant ideas of Tolstoy's educational philosophy was the promotion of learning in a spirit of individual freedom. In his teaching experiments at the Yasnaya Polyana school he constantly strove to successfully match the directional role of the teacher with the individual freedom of the learner. He saw compulsion as the root of the failure of all schools in general and the German schools in particular as he argued it in his article "On the Education of the People":

> Germany, the birthplace of the school, has found two hundred years of struggle too short a time to overcome the common people's resistance to it. In spite of the fact that the Friedrichs appointed time-expired soldiers as schoolmasters, in spite of the strictness of a law which has been in force for two hundred years, in spite of teachers being trained in the latest fashion in the colleges, in spite of the German's submissiveness to law, the coercive character of the school still weighs as heavily upon people as ever; German

> governments cannot make up their minds to annul the law which makes schooling compulsory. Germany can take a pride in its popular education only on the level of statistical data; all that the greater part of the people carry away from school is, as before, a horror of schooling. …In Germany nine-tenths of those who attend schools for the common people bring away from school a mechanical ability to read and write and such a strong distaste for the paths of learning which they have tried that they never pick up a book again. (*PSS* 8: 4, 11)

"In education equality and freedom is the main thing," Tolstoy wrote in his diary in 1860 (*PSS* 48: 27) as if pointing to the leitmotif that was to dominate all his pedagogical writings and activities. Similarly, he believed that a trusting and authentic relationship between teacher and pupil was the essential factor in the whole process of education as well as the foundation principle of successful teaching and learning.

The other tutor who comes to replace Karl Ivanych as the children grow older is St. Jerome who is stern and authoritarian. His teaching methods evoke in Tolstoy only fear and resentment to learning to the point that he begins to question not only the authority of his new tutor but the validity and truth of his teaching. A great deal of his grievance stems from Tolstoy's dislike for the assessments conducted by St. Jerome regularly and methodically and the fear of obtaining low grades. This rejection of the traditional methods of assessment and evaluation of students' academic performance was sustained by Tolstoy in his own teaching and was documented in his essay "The Yasnaya Polyana School in the Months of November and December":

> The new teacher introduced sitting on benches and answering individually. The child who was called upon would fall silent and was tormented by shame, and the teacher, with a *good-natured* air of submission to his fate or a gentle smile would say 'well,… and then? Good, very good', and so on, a teacher's approach which we all know so well.
>
> Quite apart from the fact that I have been convinced by experience that there is nothing more harmful to the child's development than this kind of individual questioning and the resulting magisterial attitude of teacher to pupil, for me there is nothing more revolving than such a spectacle. A large human being torments a small one without the least right to do so. The teacher knows that the pupil is in torment, blushing and sweating as he

> stands before him; he himself is bored and depressed, but he has a rule according to which the pupil must be trained to speak alone.
>
> …Where examinations are introduced (I mean by examinations any demand that questions be answered) a new and useless subject demanding special toil and special capacities makes its appearance, and that subject is called *preparation for examinations or tests.* A pupil in a gymnasium studies history, mathematics and above all *the art of giving answers in examinations.* I do not consider that art to be a useful subject of instruction. I, the teacher, estimate the level of knowledge of my pupils as truly as I can estimate the level of my own knowledge, although I have not made either the pupil or myself recite lessons aloud, and if an outside wants to assess this level of knowledge let him live with us for a while, and study our result and the application to life of our knowledge. There is no other way, and all attempts at examining are so much deception, lying and hindrance to teaching . (*PSS* 8: 77-78)

In *War and Peace* we find a vivid artistic depiction of what Tolstoy condemned in his pedagogical articles as an authoritarian, compulsive and regimented style of teaching inhibiting the growth of the students' creative potential and suppressing their individual freedom. Very similar to the little Tolstoy who experienced fear, humiliation and, as a result, loathing for learning under the oppressive guidance of St. Jerome, Princess Mary experiences a fear induced stupor during her lessons of geometry conducted by her father, which leads to complete paralysis of all her learning faculties. In a slightly ironic tone Tolstoy describes a daily torture by education that a highly impressionable, sensitive and intelligent student – Princess Mary – has to undergo in order to satisfy the educational ambitions of her father, who is trying to impose his rigid ideas onto the diametrically opposite system of values that informs the world of his daughter. The teacher, however, remains completely blind and inflexible to the incompatibility of his own pedagogical methods with the type of the learning style of his pupil whom he fails to reach time after time:

> …Princess Mary entered the antechamber as usual at the time appointed for the morning greeting, crossing herself with trepidation and repeating a silent prayer. Every morning

> she came in like that, and every morning she prayed that the daily interview might pass off well.
>
> "Quite well? All right then, sit down." He took the exercise book containing lessons in geometry written by himself and drew up a chair with his foot.
>
> "For tomorrow!" said he, quickly finding the page and making a scratch from one paragraph to another with his hard nail. The princess bent over the exercise book on the table.
>
> "Well, madam," he began, stooping over the book close to his daughter and placing an arm on the back of the chair on which she sat, so that she felt herself surrounded on all sides by the acrid scent of old age and tobacco, which she had known so long. "Now, madam, these triangles are equal; please note that the angle ABC…"
>
> The princess looked in a scared way at her father's eyes glittering close to her; the red patches on her face came and went, and it was plain that she understood nothing and was so frightened that her fear would prevent her understanding any of her father's further explanations, however clear they might be. Whether it was the teacher's fault or the pupil's, this same thing happened every day: the princess' eyes grew dim, she could not see and could not hear anything, but was only conscious of her stern father's withered face close to her, of his breath and the smell of him, and could think only of how to get away quickly to her own room to make out the problem in peace. The old man was beside himself; moved the chair on which he was sitting noisily backward and forward, made efforts to control himself and not become vehement, but almost always did become vehement, scolded, and sometimes flung the exercise book away. The princess gave a wrong answer.
>
> "Well now, isn't she a fool!" shouted the prince, pushing the book aside and turning sharply away; but rising immediately, he paced up and down, lightly touched his daughter's hair and sat down again. He drew up his chair and continued to explain.
>
> "This won't do, Princess; it won't do," said he, when Princess Mary, having taken and closed the exercise book with the next day's lesson, was about to leave: "Mathematics are most important, madam! I don't want to have you like our silly ladies. Get used to it and you'll like it," and he pattered her cheek. "It will drive all the nonsense out of your head." (*PSS* 9: 107-108)

In later chapters of the novel we will see how Princess Mary in her turn, having assumed the role of a tutor and mentor of her little nephew Nicholas, will exhibit the same symptoms of impatience and irritability in her overly enthusiastic and hasty attempt to impart her own knowledge onto her student. His slightest inattention and inability to follow her explanations would result in the loss of temper on the part of a highly vexed teacher and the punishment of the scared student:

> Another lately added sorrow arose from the lessons she gave her six-year-old nephew. To her consternation she detected in herself in relation to little Nicholas some symptoms of her father's irritability. However often she told herself that she must not get irritable when teaching her nephew, almost every time that, pointer in hand, she sat down to show

> him the French alphabet, she so longed to pour her own knowledge quickly and easily into the child – who was already afraid that Auntie might at any moment get angry – that at his slightest inattention she trembled, became flustered and heated, raised her voice, and sometimes pulled him by the arm and put him in the corner. Having put him in the corner she would herself begin to cry over her cruel, evil nature, and little Nicholas, following her example, would sob, and without permission would leave his corner, come to her, pull her wet hands from her face, and comfort her. (*PSS* 10: 301-302)

The description cited above certainly echoes Tolstoy's discussion about the "convenient methods of instruction" that a teacher always strives to choose in the educational process, the methods that allow him to fill the "vessel" with the required knowledge as quickly and easily as possible.

PEDAGOGY OF FREEDOM

However, one of the central premises of Tolstoy's pedagogical philosophy is his conviction that every child is not a mere vessel to be filled with abstract content but a free-thinking, creative personality who must have the full power to express his dissatisfaction, or at least to withdraw from that part of education which does not satisfy his instinct, as there is only one criterion of pedagogy – freedom. In his article "On the education of the People" Tolstoy stresses the centrality of the learner in the teaching process, or in the modern pedagogical terminology "the learner centered approach", which builds its methods around the personality of the learner and tries to adapt its means to the learning style of each individual child rather than attempting to modify the natural and organic way of learning intrinsic to the child. We read the following criticism of such an approach in the article:

> The school is arranged not so that the children shall find it convenient to learn, but so that the teacher shall find it convenient to teach. The teacher is inconvenienced by the talking, the movement, the jollity of the children, which comprise for them an essential

> condition of study, and in schools which are constructed like prison institutions questions, conversations and movements are forbidden. Instead of convincing themselves that in order to act effectively upon any object you have to study it (and in education this object is the free child) they want to teach in the way they know, just as it occurs to them, and if it is unsuccessful they want to change, not their manner of teaching, but the very nature of the child. (*PSS* 8: 13-14)

This "mechanized" system of instruction devoid of any concern for the individuality of each child receives further denouncement in the Yasnaya Polyana school essay in connection with Tolstoy's experiments regarding the search for the most effective reading technique. Here Tolstoy declares that "the teacher is always unconsciously striving to choose the means of instruction which is most convenient for himself. The more convenient a method of instruction is for the teacher the less convenient for the pupils. The only right way of teaching is that which is satisfactory to the pupils" (*PSS* 8: 54).

In his article "Training and Education" Tolstoy insists that "training, regarded as the deliberate forming of human beings according to certain models, is sterile, illegitimate and impossible" (*PSS* 8: 217). He argues that an education related to the immediate experience of the learner, and linked with the conditions of life as a whole, is more fruitful, simply because it mirrors the spontaneity of learning in its ordinary, everyday forms. Tolstoy asserts the need to reproduce in the school the conditions of spontaneous learning observable in everyday life. He believes that all the factors conducive to this - such as the stimulation of natural curiosity, the respect for individual needs, and above all, the fostering of a spirit of loving reciprocation between teacher and learner - should constitute the standards of the school.

THE MOTHER-CHILD CONVERSATIONAL MODEL FOR EDUCATION

As has been previously discussed, Tolstoy takes the image of maternal love as his favorable analogy for the relationship between the teacher and the learner. With this image Tolstoy conveys the integrity and the essential natural simplicity of the teacher - learner relationship. In his conception of teaching seen as a conversational dialogue, he perceives this relationship as a progress towards equality, a transcending of the inequality deriving from the varying degrees of knowledge and experience existing between its participants. Tolstoy describes the educational dialogue as a process of involuntary formation, conducted in the spirit of reciprocated love in his article "On the Education of the People":

> Education in the most general sense, including upbringing, is in our belief that activity of man which has its basis the demand for equality and the immutable law that education must move forward. A mother teaches her child to speak only so that they can understand one another, instinctively the mother tries to come down to his view of things, to his language, but the law of forward movement in education does not permit her to come down to him, but obliges him to rise to her knowledge. The same relationship exists between writer and reader, between the school and the pupil, between government and voluntary societies and the people. The activity of the educator, as of the person being educated, has one and the same objective. The task of the science of education is simply the study of the conditions in which these two tendencies come together into one common aim, and to indicate which conditions hinder this coming together. (*PSS* 8: 25)

It is in the context of an educational process determined not by prescriptive principles, but by the interpersonal integrity of the teacher-learner relationship that Tolstoy believed a truly individualized pedagogy could be devised. One of the most wonderful examples of such dialogic, parental approaches to teaching is the relationship of Natasha Rostova with her mother in *War and Peace* which is informal, however permeated with the feeling of mutual respect and genuine trust. It is informal and not

oppressive, gentle yet firm, informed with the experience and ideals of honor and motherly love, and finds its highest manifestations not in the classroom but in heartfelt, private conversations between mother and daughter. In Tolstoy's view this is the ideal, most effective type of communication between the teacher and learner, which provides the latter with the necessary tools to make his own decisions and encourages him to seek further advice rather than shunning it. And though the author, an astute observer and a great judge of the child psyche, good-naturedly chaffs the old Countess Rostova for her so human and maternal illusion that she knows all her children's deepest secrets, nevertheless, she seems to have guessed with her maternal instincts, according to Tolstoy, the importance of the individualized and balanced approach to each of her children, and managed to preserve that fragile tension between freedom and parental control. For the first time in the novel Tolstoy's view on the problem of children's upbringing is voiced rather early, in the first part of volume I. The drawing room conversation between Anna Mikhailovna, a friend of the Rostovs and the old Countess inevitably turns onto the subject of their children and Natasha's mother in her simple and homely manner without any excessive theorizing shares her purely experiential approaches to raising her children. It is rather telling that Tolstoy's dislike and distrust of all formal pedagogical theories is clearly discernable already at the end of this conversation where Vera, Natasha's older sister, obviously represents the proper and rigid way of training but somehow divorced from the natural, lively and imaginative world of her younger sister:

> "How plainly all these young people wear their hearts on their sleeves!" said Anna Mikhailovna, pointing to Nicholas as he went out. *"Cousinage – dangereux voisinage* [Cousinhood is a dangerous neighborhood]," she added.

> "Yes," said the countess when the brightness these young people had brought into the room had vanished; and as if answering a question no one had put but which was always in her mind, "and how much suffering, how much anxiety one has had to go through that we might rejoice in them now! And yet really the anxiety is greater now than the joy. One is always, always anxious! Especially just at this age, so dangerous both for girls and boys."
>
> "It all depends on the bringing up," remarked the visitor.
>
> "Yes, you're quite right, continued the countess. "Till now I have always, thank God, been my children's friend and had their full confidence," said she, repeating the mistake of so many parents who imagine that their children have no secrets from them. "I know I shall always be my daughters' first confidante, and that if Nicholas, with his impulsive nature, does get into mischief (a boy can't help it), he will all the same never be like those Petersburg young men."
>
> "What a charming creature your younger girl is," said the visitor; "a little volcano!"
>
> "Yes, a regular volcano," said the count. "Takes after me! And what a voice she has; though she's my daughter, I tell the truth when I say she'll be a singer, a second Salomoni! We have engaged an Italian to give her lessons."
>
> "Isn't she too young? I have heard that it harms the voice to train it at that age."
>
> "Oh no, not at all too young!" replied the count. "Why, our mothers used to be married at twelve or thirteen."
>
> "And she's in love with Boris already. Just fancy!" said the countess with a gentle smile, looking at Boris' mother, and went on, evidently concerned with a thought that always occupied her: "Now you see if I were to be severe with her and to forbid it … goodness knows what they might be up to on the sly" (she meant that they would be kissing), "but as it is, I know every word she utters. She will come running to me of her own accord in the evening and tell me everything. Perhaps I spoil her, but really that seems the best plan. With her older sister I was stricter."
>
> "Yes, I was brought up quite differently," remarked the handsome elder daughter, Countess Vera, with a smile.
>
> But the smile did not enhance Vera's beauty as smiles generally do; on the contrary it gave her an unnatural, and therefore unpleasant, expression. Vera was good-looking, not at all stupid, quick at learning, was well brought up, and had a pleasant voice; what she said was true and appropriate, yet, strange to say, everyone – the visitors and countess alike – turned to look at her as if wondering why she had said it, and they all felt awkward.
>
> "People are always too clever with their eldest children and try to make something exceptional of them," said the visitor.
>
> "What's the good of denying it, my dear? Our dear countess was too clever with Vera," said the count. (*PSS* 9: 51-52)

One of the central premises of Tolstoy's educational approach lies in the idea that children achieve understanding, knowledge and skill through the reciprocal interchange of thought, language and experience with their mother, teacher or friends. This reciprocity of conversation serves for Tolstoy as a model of all genuinely educational relationships. Conversation lies at the very heart of Tolstoy's teaching method and

begins from the moment pupil and teacher meet. This shared process, though, transforms the understanding of both parties in multiple ways according to the experience of each and can be just as enlightening for the teacher as it is for the pupil. Many of the most memorable passages in the educational essays are directed towards showing how Tolstoy himself has been forced to reconsider his own understanding – of art, literature and morality no less than of education – in the light of his conversations with his pupils. This conversational model of the mother-child relationship finds its full realization in *War and Peace* through the dialogic relationship between Natasha Rostova and her mother, the old Countess. Throughout the novel we see Natasha in constant dialogue with all of her family members, but most importantly with her mother with whom she forms a special bond based not only on the daughter-mother kinship but on the child's desire to reach out for deeper wisdom and knowledge of her parent or teacher not forcefully imposed but delicately shared in the mutually respectful and intimate atmosphere. We observe how Natasha time after time seeks her mother's advice and company not only at the most crucial moments of life-changing decisions but also on a daily basis because the participation in this reciprocal conversation is mutually beneficial, enriching and constitutes one of "the greatest pleasures of both mother and daughter." In the novel Tolstoy accurately captures and communicates to the reader the essence of such relationship through his descriptions of Natasha's bedtime talks with her mother, which radiate such an amazing glow of human intimacy and complete understanding of one another attained in the process of conversational exchange that the participants can easily finish each other's sentences without even uttering them out loud:

One night when the old countess, in nightcap and dressing jacket, without her false curls, and with her poor little knob of hair showing under her white cotton cap, knelt sighing and groaning on a rug and bowing to the ground in prayer, her door creaked and Natasha, also in a dressing jacket with slippers on her bare feet and her hair in curlpapers, ran in. The countess – her prayerful mood dispelled – looked round and frowned. She was finishing her last prayer: "Can it be that this couch will be my grave?" Natasha, flushed and eager, seeing her mother in prayer, suddenly checked her rush, half sat down, and unconsciously put out her tongue as if chiding herself. Seeing that her mother was still praying she ran on tiptoe to the bed and, rapidly slipping one little foot against the other, pushed off her slippers and jumped onto the bed the countess had feared might become her grave. This couch was high, with a feather bed and five pillows each smaller than the one below. Natasha jumped on it, sank into the feather bed, rolled over to the wall, and began snuggling up the bedclothes as she settled down, raising her knees to her chin, kicking out and laughing almost inaudibly, now covering herself up head and all, and now peeping at her mother. The countess finished her prayers and came to the bed with a stern face, but seeing Natasha's head was covered, she smiled in her kind, weak way.

"Now then, now then!" said she.

"Mamma, can we have a talk? Yes?" said Natasha. "Now, just one on your throat and another …that'll do!" And seizing her mother round the neck, she kissed her on the throat. In her behavior to her mother Natasha seemed rough, but she was so sensitive and tactful that however she clasped her mother she always managed to do it without hurting her or making her feel uncomfortable or displeased.

"Well, what is it tonight?" said the mother, having arranged her pillows and waited until Natasha, after turning over a couple of times, had settled down beside her under the quilt, spread out her arms, and assumed a serious expression.

These visits of Natasha's at night before the count returned from his club were one of the greatest pleasures of both mother and daughter.

"What is it tonight? – But I have to tell you …"

Natasha put her hand on her mother's mouth.

"About Boris … I know," she said seriously; "that's what I have come about. Don't say it – I know. No, do tell me!" and she removed her hand. "Tell me, Mamma! He's nice?"

Natasha, you are sixteen. At your age I was married. You say Boris is nice. He is very nice, and I love him like a son. But what then? … What are you thinking about? You have quite turned his head, I can see that…."

As she said this the countess looked round at her daughter. Natasha was lying looking steadily straight before her at one of the mahogany sphinxes carved on the corners of the bedstead, so that the countess only saw her daughter's face in profile. That face struck her by its peculiarly serious and concentrated expression. Natasha was listening and considering.

"Well, what then?" said she.

"You have quite turned his head, and why? What do you want of him? You know you can't marry him."

"Why not?" said Natasha, without changing her position.

"Because he is young, because he is poor, because he is a relation … and because you yourself don't love him."

"How do you know?"

"I know. It is not right, darling!"

"But if I want to …" said Natasha.

"Leave off talking nonsense," said the countess.

"But if I want to …"

"Natasha, I am in earnest …"

Natasha did not let her finish. She drew the countess' large hand to her, kissed it on the back and then on the palm, then again turned it over and began kissing first one knuckle, then the space between the knuckles, then the next knuckle, whispering, "January, February, March, April, May. Speak, Mamma, why don't you say anything? Speak!" said she, turning to her mother, who was tenderly gazing at her daughter and in that contemplation seemed to have forgotten all she had wished to say.

"It won't do, my love! Not everyone will understand this friendship dating from your childish days, and to see him so intimate with you may injure you in the eyes of other young men who visit us, and above all it torments him for nothing. He may already have found a suitable and wealthy match, and now he's half crazy."

"Crazy?" repeated Natasha.

"I'll tell you some things about myself. I had a cousin …"

"I know! Cyril Matveich … but he is old."

"He was not always old. But this is what I'll do, Natasha, I'll have a talk with Boris. He need not come so often…"

"Why not, if he likes to?"

"Because I know it will end in nothing…."

"How can you know? No, Mamma, don't speak to him! What nonsense!" said Natasha in the tone of one being deprived of her property. "Well, I won't marry, but let him come if he enjoys it and I enjoy it." Natasha smiled and looked at her mother. "Not to marry, but just so," she added.

"How so, my pet?"

"Just so. There's no need for me to marry him. But … just so."

"Just so, just so," repeated the countess, and shaking all over, she went off into a good-humored, unexpected, elderly laugh.

"Don't laugh, stop!" cried Natasha. "You're shaking the whole bed! You're awfully like me, just such another giggler…. Wait …" and she seized the countess' hands and kissed a knuckle of the little finger, saying, "June," and continued, kissing, "July, August," on the other hand. "But, Mamma, is he very much in love? What do you think? Was anybody ever so much in love with you? And he's very nice, very, very nice. Only not quite my taste – he is so narrow, like the dining-room clock…. Don't you understand? Narrow, you know – gray, light gray …"

"What rubbish you're talking!" said the countess.

Natasha continued: "Don't you really understand? Nicholas would understand…. Bezukhov, now, is blue, dark-blue and red, and he is square."

"You flirt with him too," said the countess laughing.

"No, he is a Freemason, I have found out. He is fine, dark-blue and red…. How can I explain it to you?"

"Little countess!" the count's voice called from behind the door. "You're not asleep?" Natasha jumped up, snatched up her slippers, and ran barefoot to her own room. (*PSS* 10: 191-194)

Another one of these heartfelt conversations in which Natasha confides in her mother happens under the much more heightened circumstances which promise to change not only Natasha's life, but also affect the situation of the whole family. Prince Andrew is on the verge of proposing marriage to Natasha who is experiencing a whirlpool of

emotions ranging from fright to happiness and rapture. It is especially important for her at this decisive moment to check her agitated emotions against somebody's sensible and experienced perception, and once again she consults her mother who is extremely in tune with her daughter and resounds every slightest movement of her soul providing much needed comforting advice and direction:

> In the evening, when Prince Andrew had left, the countess went up to Natasha and whispered: "Well, what?"
>
> "Mamma! For heaven's sake don't ask me anything now! One can't talk about that," said Natasha.
>
> But all the same that night Natasha, now agitated and now frightened, lay a long time in her mother's bed gazing straight before her. She told her how he had complimented her, how he told her he was going abroad, asked her where they were going to spend the summer, and then how he had asked her about Boris.
>
> "But such a … such a … never happened to me before!" she said. "Only I feel afraid in his presence. I am always afraid when I'm with him. What does that mean? Does it mean that it's the real thing? Yes? Mamma, are you asleep?"
>
> "No, my love; I am frightened myself," answered her mother. "Now go!"
>
> "All the same I shan't sleep. What silliness, to sleep! Mummy! Mummy! Such a thing never happened to me before," she said, surprised and alarmed at the feeling she was aware of in herself. "And could we ever have thought! …"
>
> "And it had to happen that he should come specially to Petersburg while we are here. And it had to happen that we should meet at that ball. It is fate. Clearly it is fate that everything led up to this! Already then, directly I saw him I felt something peculiar."
>
> "What else did he say to you? What are those verses? Read them …" said her mother, thoughtfully, referring to some verses Prince Andrew had written in Natasha's album.
>
> "Mamma, one need not be ashamed of his being a widower?"
>
> "Don't, Natasha! Pray to God. 'Marriages are made in heaven,'" said her mother.
>
> "Darling Mummy, how I love you! How happy I am!" cried Natasha, shedding tears of joy and excitement and embracing her mother. (*PSS* 10: 219-220)

It is rather indicative that throughout the novel Natasha remains one of the most expressive, dialogic characters who is brimming with questions and engages everybody who comes in contact with her into a conversational exchange. As opposed to the introvert, ponderous characters such as Prince Andrew and Pierre Bezukhov who look inside themselves to find answers to life's toughest questions, Natasha serves as a wonderful example of Tolstoy's ideal learner type and of a learning process based on

close interpersonal relationship of a learner with a teacher where both parties are being engaged in continuous and mutually enriching conversation. If we turn to Tolstoy's descriptions of a typical lesson at the Yasnaya Polyana school, we will see that questioning techniques were used constantly to stimulate interest in new subject-matter. Besides, the exploratory method of teaching adopted by Tolstoy in his school was heavily dependent on question-response exchanges between teacher and pupil and afforded regular evidence of the progress and attainment of the pupils, and could probably be regarded as a form of continuous learner knowledge evaluation without implementation of traditional assessment techniques, which Tolstoy opposed so vehemently.

Charles Baudouin in his book *Tolstoi: the Teacher* gives a perceptive and in-depth exploration of Tolstoy's evolution as a thinker and teacher as well as the influences that informed some of his leading educational ideas. The author also draws a distinct parallel between Tolstoy's literary works and his educational activities, noting that *War and Peace* was written after the first period of Tolstoy's educational activity, *Anna Karenina* after the second. In both novels Tolstoy's vision into the child's nature is depicted so vividly that it makes it hard to deny that the teacher came to the aid of the artist. Despite his insightful analyses of the ways Tolstoy acquires his keen psychological observations of the child's soul that allow him to draw such unforgettable and true to life child portraits in his novels, Baudouin fails to understand, in our opinion, the true significance and depth of Natasha's relationship with her mother in the novel. He believes that Tolstoy takes the old countess Rostova as an example of a parent who lives under naïve illusion that she knows her children's most intimate thoughts, however, she remains

utterly unaware of the secret life of Natasha's soul and is unable to keep up with the swift evolution of her daughter from a child to a young woman. In the chapter, for example, where Baudouin discusses Tolstoy's understanding of the child's inner world and its representation in his literary works, we find the following comment: "In *War and Peace,* Countess Rostov may be taken as an example of this illusion – a very human and maternal illusion, after all: "Up to the present, thank Heaven, I have been my children's friend, and they have wholly confided in me," said the countess, thus perpetuating the error made by so many parents who imagine that their children keep no secrets from them. "I know I shall always be the first in whom my daughters will confide….." For those who follow the development of the countess's children, there is something almost comical about this assurance of hers. Natasha, her daughter, whose life we will follow previous to her marriage and motherhood, is one of Tolstoy's most living creations. She represents life in swift development, that proteiform life of whose elusive character Countess Rostov has not the faintest suspicion" (Baudouin 71-72). It is highly significant that Baudouin neglects to deal with the dialogic aspect of the mother-daughter relationship and the level of connectedness that it allows them to achieve in the process. Nor does he acknowledge the numerous allusions that exist in the text pointing to the likeness of the personalities between mother and daughter and their almost instinctive state of being in tune with one another. But of course, one of the most conspicuous evidences of the old countess's deep understanding of her daughter's inner world is the fact that it is none other than she who first recognizes that dangerous trait in Natasha's personality - that insatiable desire for unrestrained freedom – which eventually leads her

daughter to the brink of personal destruction. It is on that memorable Christmas week in Otradnoe, in the evening when Natasha is singing for her mother when the old countess tormented by an unhappy premonition happens to foretell her daughter's future calamity:

> The old countess sat with a blissful yet sad smile and with tears in her eyes, occasionally shaking her head. She thought of Natasha and of her own youth, and of how there was something unnatural and dreadful in this impending marriage of Natasha and Prince Andrew. Dimmler, who had seated himself beside the countess, listened with closed eyes.
>
> "Ah, Countess," he said at last, "that's a European talent, she has nothing to learn – what softness, tenderness, and strength…."
>
> "Ah, how afraid I am for her, how afraid I am!" said the countess, not realizing to whom she was speaking. Her maternal instinct told her that Natasha had too much of something, and that because of this she would not be happy. (*PSS* 10: 280)

THE BALANCE OF FREEDOM AND DISCIPLINE IN TOLSTOY'S PEDAGOGY

The problems of freedom and necessity as the central problem of Tolstoy's philosophy and history receive an in-depth elaboration in the novel. Similarly, the tension between these two philosophical antipodes also to a great extent informs all of Tolstoy's pedagogical articles. The principles of a liberating pedagogy devised by Tolstoy find their articulation in discussions about discipline and the freedom of choice and self-expression for students on the pages of his Yasnaya Polyana school essays. Tolstoy was committed to the view that fruitful and productive learning could be promoted only through caring, encouraging and non-compulsive classroom relationships. This conviction was clearly manifested in the policies he adopted on matters relating to school discipline and pupil assessment. He believed that discipline could be maintained normally through the intrinsic motivation of intellectually and imaginatively absorbing classroom activities, and through the full involvement of the pupils in the work of the

school. Tolstoy argued that the further the students would progress in their education and maturity, the more capable they would become of maintaining order and discipline that they would naturally accept it as one of the integral factors of their educational process:

> The further the pupils go on the more instruction is divided into branches, and the more essential the order becomes. Consequently, provided the development of a school is normal and uncoercive, the more the pupils educate themselves the more capable they become of order, the more strongly they themselves feel that order is required, and the stronger the influence of the teacher on them becomes in this respect. In the Yasnaya Polyana school this rule has been constantly confirmed from the day of its foundation. At first it was impossible to make subdivisions either for classes or subjects, for recreation or for lessons; everything fused of its own accord into one, and all attempts at dividing things up remained vain. But now in the oldest class there are pupils who themselves demand that the timetable be followed, who are discontented when they are taken away from a lesson, and who themselves constantly chase away the little ones who come running in to them.
>
> In my opinion this outward disorder is useful and irreplaceable, however strange and inconvenient it may seem for the teacher. I shall often have occasion to speak of the advantages of this arrangement; of the supposed inconveniences I shall say this. In the first place we find this disorder, or free order, frightening only because we have grown used to quite a different one in which were reared ourselves. Secondly, in this as in many similar cases, violence is used only out of haste and a lack of respect for human nature. It seems to us that the disorder is growing, is becoming greater and greater and has no bounds, it seems that there is no means of putting an end to it other than the use of force – but if only we had waited a little the disorder (or animation) would have settled in its own natural way into a much better and securer order than any that we may invent. Schoolchildren are people, small people but people with the same needs as we have and thinking in the same ways; they all want to learn, that is the only reason why they go to school, and therefore they will very readily come to the conclusion that they must submit to certain conditions in order to learn. (*PSS* 8: 33-34)

Tolstoy considered that discipline would emerge naturally from the trusting relationships existing between teachers and students, and that the ultimate guarantee of good behavior would be mutual respect and affection resulting from this. In Tolstoy's descriptions of seemingly lax and unorganized school activities, at a closer look we can clearly discern the delicate tension of freedom and order that was consistently maintained at the school and, more importantly, the foremost concern for providing the students with the possibility of choice and the opportunity to opt out of the activities that they

considered non-stimulating or boring. We can foresee that the following description from the Yasnaya Polyana school essay, where Tolstoy advocates free attendance of classes for students of all ages should raise a heated discussion among the modern day pedagogues about the effectiveness and even the very relevance of such a proposition. Most of them would probably argue that such an approach is inapplicable to younger pupils as they are not capable of knowing at such an early age what and how they should be taught and cannot grasp the structure of the curriculum in its wholeness. However for Tolstoy with his deep respect for the child's personality and his intellectual abilities this was not a premise, it was an axiom. He believed that the possibility of running off like this was useful and necessary simply as a means of insuring the teacher against the worst and crudest mistakes and bad teaching practices:

> Sometimes, when the classes are interesting and there have been a lot of them (sometimes there are up to seven good hours a day) and the children have grown tired, or before a holiday, when the stoves at home have been prepared for a steam bath, suddenly, at the second or third lesson after dinner, two or three boys run into the room and without saying a word hastily pick up their caps.
>
> 'What's up?'
>
> 'Going home.'
>
> 'But what about the lessons? There's singing you know!'
>
> 'But the lads say they're going home!' he replies, slipping away with his cap.
>
> 'But who says?'
>
> 'Come on lads!'
>
> 'What's all this? What?' asks the teacher in concern, having prepared his lesson. 'Stop.'
>
> But another boy runs into the room with a flushed, anxious face. 'What are you waiting for?' he turns angrily upon the boy who has been delayed, and is picking at his cap in indecision; 'the lads are way over there by now, up by the smithy, I reckon.'
>
> 'Coming?'
>
> 'I'm coming.'
>
> And the both run off, shouting from the doorway, 'Good-bye, Ivan Ivanych!'
>
> And who are these lads who have decided to go home? And how did they make the decision? Heaven knows. You have no way of finding out exactly who made the decision. They did not hold a conference, did not make a plot, but it just occurred to the lads to go home. 'The lads are going' and small feet rang out on the steps, somebody tumbled down the steps head over heels and, hopping about and shoving in the snow, running past one another on the narrow pathway, shouting, the lads went running home.

> This kind of thing is repeated once or twice a week. It is insulting and unpleasant for the teacher – who could fail to agree there? – but who will not also agree how much greater the significance of the five, six and sometimes seven lessons a day for each class, all freely and willingly attended each day by the pupils, because of one case of this kind. Only when such cases are repeated can we be assured that the instruction, although inadequate and one-sided, is not altogether bad and harmful. If the question were put this way; which is better – that there should be no such case in the course of a year, or to have such cases repeated in more than half the lessons – we would choose the latter. At any rate I in the Yasnaya Polyana school have been glad that such events have recurred several times a month. Though I frequently tell the children that they can always go away when they like, the teacher's influence is so strong that I have been afraid lately lest the discipline of classes, timetables and marks might encroach upon their freedom without their noticing it, so that they would submit completely to the cunning net of order we have cast and lose the possibility of choice and protest. (*PSS* 8: 41-42)

The emphasis on individual freedom and a tendency toward a liberal pedagogical practice did not, however, lead Tolstoy into the fallacy of denying the importance of purposeful and ordered learning, of stimulating and enriching curriculum content, and of the active and formative role of a teacher in the guidance of class room activities. Tolstoy saw the balance of freedom and order as being crucial to the entire process of learning; in his school he adopted the highly formative and complex form of the pedagogy that helped him to meet the challenge of maintaining this fragile equilibrium. He was far from creating an uncontrolled learning environment where every child pursued his interests in conditions of total disorder. The activities of the school were carefully organized, and lessons were based always on intellectually and imaginatively stimulating content, with a view to guiding the processes of individual discovery in every child towards their greatest possible degree of fulfillment. At the Yasnaya Polyana school informality and freedom from repressive discipline were combined with highly intensive learning activities, conducted under the close guidance of teachers, and focused on subject-matter chosen for the intellectually and imaginatively enriching nature of its

content. We should emphasize that this delicate balance between freedom and order was considered by Tolstoy as the foundation of the whole educational ethos of the school and presented the teachers perhaps with the hardest challenge of all. It consisted in the fact that the full potential of individual freedom and the full scope of the teacher-learner relationship are both ultimately realized in the mutually constraining influence that each exerts on the other. The pupil continuously strives to broaden the limitations of the learning environment by virtue of the persistent challenge represented by the nature of his learning needs and the teacher naturally is inclined to narrow them due to his responsibility to adopt the pedagogic measures necessary to fulfill those needs. The potential conflict between these two opposing tendencies is transcended according to Tolstoy by the quality of loving reciprocation in which the activities of teaching and learning should be conducted. In his article "Training and Education" he argues that if teaching is to be truly influential, it is essential that it be charged with love for the learner and learning in general:

> People say that knowledge bears in itself an element of moral training (*erziehliges Element*) – this is both true and untrue, and in this proposition lies the fundamental error in the existing paradoxical view of training. Knowledge is knowledge and bears nothing in itself. The element of moral training, however, lies in the teaching of the knowledge , in the teacher's love of his subject and in his loving communication of it, in the teacher's relationship to his pupil. If you wish to train your pupils morally by means of knowledge love your subject and know it, and the pupils will love both you and the subject, and you will train them; but if you do not love it yourself, then no matter how much you make them study the subject will not produce a moral influence. And here again the only yardstick, the only salvation is once more the same freedom of the pupils to listen to the teacher or not to listen, to accept or not to accept his moral influence, i.e., it is for them alone to decide whether he knows and loves his subject. (*PSS* 8: 245)

THE PROBLEMS OF FREEDOM AND NECESSITY IN WAR AND PEACE

The tension between personal freedom and necessity is also a prominent theme in *War and Peace,* where the dialectic of necessity and freedom are explored against the background of major political and social occurrences. Here among other philosophical themes Tolstoy examines the concept of unrestricted freedom and its destructive influences in connection with the episode of Natasha's infatuation with Anatole Kuragin. It is yet another illustration of the importance Tolstoy assigned to the ideas of moral and social education. At first glance the closeness between Tolstoy's favorite heroine and Anatole seems to be unrealistic and impossible. What does the poetic and all-embracing Natasha have in common with the self-centered and egotistic Anatole? It turns out that they both share one important trait – the desire for freedom which can be destructive to them and others if not limited by certain moral responsibilities. Here is a characteristic that Tolstoy gives to Anatole: "Anatole was always content with his position, with himself, and with others. He was instinctively and thoroughly convinced that it was impossible for him to live otherwise than as he did and that he had never in his life done anything base. He was incapable of considering how his actions might affect others or what the consequences of this or that action of his might be" (*PSS* 10: 335).

Anatole has completely freed himself from the responsibility and consequences of his actions. His animal-like and naïve egotism is absolute as it is not restricted by anything in Anatole's consciousness or feelings. After the unsuccessful abduction of Natasha, Pierre during his explanation with Anatole cries out in a fit of rage: "After all,

you must understand that besides your pleasure there is such a thing as other people's happiness and peace, and that you are ruining a whole life for the sake of amusing yourself!" (*PSS* 10: 367). But Anatole does not know that and does not want to. Kuragin is deprived of this ability to know what will happen after the moment of pleasure that he seeks and how it will be reflected on the lives of others, how it will be looked upon. All these conditions do not exist for him. He sincerely believes with all his being that the sole aim of existence for everybody around him is to bring him pleasure and amusement.

Such complete unrestricted freedom is given to Anatole by his inanity, his inability for intellectual work. People who consciously and thoughtfully participate in life like Pierre or Prince Andrei, are not free from life's complications and its eternal question "why?". And while Pierre and Prince Andrei are tormented by life's hardest questions, Anatole lives like a healthy fool enjoying every minute – foolishly, like an animal but lightly and with confidence.

Next day after the unsuccessful abduction Anatole in his sleigh passes Pierre who is on his way to Marya Dmitrievna to find out about what had happened. It is obvious to us from the description that the events of the previous night are a long gone past for Anatole, he is happy with himself and his life, he is handsome and in a strange way even beautiful in his confidence and complete contentment with life (Tolstoy stylizes him here almost to a fairy tale character of a Russian Ivanushka – durachek). Anatole's seeming harmony with life even evokes an envious feeling in Pierre:

> Anatole was sitting upright in the classic pose of military dandies, the lower part of his face hidden by his beaver collar and his head slightly bent. His face was fresh and rosy,

> his white-plumed hat, tilted to one side, disclosed his curled and pomaded hair besprinkled with powdery snow. "Yes, indeed, that's a true sage," thought Pierre. "He sees nothing beyond the pleasure of the moment, nothing troubles him and so he is always cheerful, satisfied, and serene. What wouldn't I give to be like him!" he thought enviously. (*PSS* 10: 362)

Natasha also lives with the feeling of total freedom inside – there is something animalistic about her: in her unconstrained spontaneity, in her emotional gusts, in her natural healthy egotism. There is something elusive and imperceptible in all her gestures and movements – she bursts in the room like a wind and draws everybody in her whirlpool, she is perched on the windowsill in Otradnoe like a bird who is ready to fly away into the night. Natasha is brimming with life in its purest, rawest manifestations. It is not without reason that Tolstoy brings Natasha and Anatole together, by doing this he contrasts two types of freedom: Anatole's absolute destructive freedom from moral obligations and Natasha's freedom from everything artificial and hypocritical in life and in human relationships. Anatole seeks in his freedom only personal pleasure, Natasha has a gift to bring out the best potential in people who come in touch with her.

Natasha's natural unrestricted desires bring her to catastrophe. She learns that freedom has two sides and there is danger in the wish for absolute personal freedom. Natasha knows that Anatole is enraptured with her, it pleases and amuses her, but his presence also makes her feel "constrained and oppressed". The absence of "a barrier of modesty" between them frightens Natasha. Tolstoy repeats several times throughout the episode Natasha's fear and amazement at the complete absence of any moral barrier between her and Anatole: "When she was not looking at him she felt that he was looking

at her shoulders, and she voluntarily caught his eye so that he should look into hers rather than this. But looking into his eyes she was frightened, realizing that there was not that barrier of modesty she had always felt between herself and other men" (*PSS* 10: 331). A little further we read again: "Anatole was at the door, evidently on the lookout for the Rostovs. Immediately after greeting the count he went up to Natasha and followed her. As soon as she saw him she was seized by the same feeling she had had at the opera – gratified vanity at his admiration of her and fear at the absence of a moral barrier between them" (*PSS* 10: 340).

Human freedom is not found outside of moral boundaries. Free human relationships should be guided by morals or even bound by them, otherwise, freedom is in danger of turning into blind self-serving egotism. Ideally, the combination of morals and freedom should create a harmony, where morals do not suppress freedom and freedom is not immoral. Natasha's instinctive freedom, so human and natural, reaches the highest level and takes her to that boundary, where she cannot find anymore moral justification for her actions and it is impossible to know what is good and what is bad, what is reasonable and what is madness. At some point Natasha sincerely asks herself why she cannot be together with both Prince Andrei and Anatole: "Why could that not be as well?" she sometimes asked herself in complete bewilderment. "Only so could I be completely happy; but now I have to choose, and I can't be happy without either of them" (*PSS* 10: 345). Her freedom of spirit reaches the outmost boundary beyond which is chaos and self-destruction.

We discussed this episode in such great detail because it perfectly illustrates Tolstoy's masterful incorporation of his main philosophical ideas into the peaceful scenes of the domestic plane. These scenes echo and intertwine with his historical-philosophical digressions as for Tolstoy the characters' behavior in life's critical situations is the manifestation of the laws of life, the same laws that affect historical figures or nations on a broader historical scale of events. Thus, the reader can see a connection between Kuragin's behavior in every day life and Napoleon's behavior in historical situations. We see the repetition of the same theme of absolute freedom from any moral convictions in relation to a historical figure. Here is the characteristic that Tolstoy gives to Napoleon: "It was evident that he had long been convinced that it was impossible for him to make a mistake, and that in his perception whatever he did was right, not because it harmonized with any idea of right or wrong, but because *he* did it" (*PSS* 11: 29). Just like Anatole, Napoleon is devoid of the ability to understand that the world exists for more than just his personal satisfaction. During his conversation with Balashev, the ambassador of the Russian emperor, Napoleon treats him not as an envoy from his enemy but as his devoted friend and worshiper. There is even Anatole's naïveté in Napoleon's sincere conviction that everybody should want what he wants: "Balashev bowed his head with an air indicating that he would like to make his bow and leave, and only listened because he could not help hearing what was said to him. Napoleon did not notice this expression; he treated Balashev not as an envoy from his enemy, but as a man now fully devoted to him and who must rejoice at his former master's humiliation" (*PSS* 11: 31).

The theme of human freedom receives an extensive treatment in the Second Epilogue. Tolstoy notes that "if the will of every man were free, that is, if each man could act as he pleased, all history would be a series of disconnected incidents" (*PSS* 12: 389). He maintains that despite of our consciousness of being free, complete freedom is impossible, as our every action depends on motives and other existing conditions. Yet we refuse to accept it as an axiom because a man having no freedom cannot be conceived of except as deprived of life. All man's efforts in life are directed to increasing his personal freedom. Once again Tolstoy raises the important questions in connection with the freedom of human will. He asks: "What is man's responsibility to society, the conception of which results from the conception of freedom? What is conscience and the perception of right and wrong in actions that follow from the consciousness of freedom?" (*PSS* 12: 389). Just like in the episode with Natasha and Anatole, Tolstoy maintains that complete freedom or complete necessity cannot exist in their pure form in life and if they could, it would have led to chaos and destruction. Complete freedom in man is impossible because "a being uninfluenced by the external world, standing outside of time and independent of cause, is no longer a man" (*PSS* 12: 391).

Tolstoy also applies this argument to his theory of history that he develops throughout the book. We see how mercilessly and sarcastically the author ridicules his characters for their consciousness of self-importance and unlimited power. In chapter six of volume three we find one such example when Tolstoy describes Napoleon's meeting with the Russian ambassador Balashev: "It was plain that Balashev's personality did not interest him at all. Evidently only what took place within *his* own mind interested him.

Nothing outside himself had any significance for him, because everything in the world, it seemed to him, depended entirely on his will" (*PSS* 11: 23).

The author states that "it is true that we are not conscious of our dependence, but by admitting our free will we arrive at absurdity, while by admitting our dependence on the external world, on time, and on cause, we arrive at laws" (*PSS* 12: 397). Tolstoy calls upon the reader "to renounce a freedom that does not exist, and to recognize a dependence of which we are not conscious" (*PSS* 12: 397). This understanding of the problems of freedom and responsibility and their perpetual dichotomy echoes closely Tolstoy's approaches to the issues of freedom and order in his teaching practices as has been demonstrated earlier. In his school he advocated freedom not as the end in itself or a means for self-assertion but as a necessary condition for nurturing the spirit of freely oriented discovery and as a natural outcome of the loving and reciprocal communication between the teacher and the student. Tolstoy emphasized the importance of maintaining a delicate balance of freedom and order in his school where informality and freedom from repressive discipline, regimentation as well as a preset curriculum were combined with a carefully planned and intensive sequencing of learning activities, conducted under the close guidance of teachers.

THE IDEAS OF ETHICO-RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Tolstoy believed that individual freedom was best fostered through the development of the religious and moral potential of each student and the nurturing of the spirit of responsibility and altruism which he considered to be the essence of the ethico-

religious education. In the novel these ideas find their realization in the portrayal and constant juxtaposition of several family clans: the Rostovs with their "life by the heart," spontaneity, compassion and unselfish regard for the welfare of others, and the Kuragins and the Bergs with their "life by the mind" - calculating, egotistical, self-serving and indifferent to the common misfortune. All true members of the Rostov family are endowed with these hallmarks of the family clan – the feeling of compassion to all people regardless of their social status or wealth and the spirit of altruism especially in life's most trying situations. Perhaps one of the most memorable manifestations of this ideal can be found in the episode where the Rostovs, while preparing to leave Moscow on the eve of the enemy's entry into the city, decide to give up all their carts to the wounded leaving all their property behind, which clearly means their inevitable and total ruin. Berg, the Rostovs' son-in-law, who had married Natasha's older sister Vera, also participates in the scene but with the diametrically opposite dynamic – he represents a self-profiting petty bourgeois spirit who seeks to benefit even from the national calamity and remains untouched by the scope of human suffering:

> Just then the countess came in from the sitting room with a weary and dissatisfied expression. Berg hurriedly jumped up, kissed her hand, asked about her health, and, swaying his head from side to side to express sympathy, remained standing beside her.
>
> "Yes, Mamma, I tell you sincerely that these are hard and sad times for every Russian. But why are you so anxious? You have still time to get away…."
>
> "I can't think what the servants are about," said the countess, turning to her husband. "I have just been told that nothing is ready yet. Somebody after all must see to things. One misses Mitenka at such times. There won't be any end to it."
>
> The count was about to say something, but evidently restrained himself. He got up from his chair and went to the door. At that moment Berg drew out his handkerchief as if to blow his nose and, seeing the knot in it, pondered, shaking his head sadly and significantly.
>
> "And I have a great favor to ask of you, Papa," said he.
>
> "Hm …" said the count, and stopped.
>
> "I was driving past Yusupov's house just now," said Berg with a laugh, "when the steward, a man I know, ran out and asked me whether I wouldn't buy something. I went

in out of curiosity, you know, and there is a small chiffonier and a dressing table. You know how dear Vera wanted a chiffonier like that and how we had a dispute about it." (At the mention of the chiffonier and dressing table Berg involuntarily changed his tone to one of pleasure at his admirable domestic arrangements.) "And it's such a beauty! It pulls out and has a secret English drawer, you know! And dear Vera has long wanted one. I wish to give her a surprise, you see. I saw so many of those peasant carts in your yard. Please let me have one, I will pay the man well, and …"

The count frowned and coughed. "Ask the countess, I don't give orders."

"If it's inconvenient, please don't," said Berg. "Only I so wanted it, for dear Vera's sake."

"Oh, go to the devil, all of you! To the devil, the devil, the devil …!" cried the old count. "My head's in a whirl!" And he left the room. The countess began to cry.

"Yes, Mamma! Yes, there are very hard times!" said Berg.

Natasha left the room with her father and, as if finding it difficult to reach some decision, first followed him and then ran downstairs. Petya was in the porch, engaged in giving out weapons to the servants who were to leave Moscow. The loaded carts were still standing in the yard. Two of them had been uncorded and a wounded officer was climbing into one of them helped by an orderly.

"Do you know what it's about?" Petya asked Natasha. She understood that he meant what were their parents quarreling about. She did not answer.

"It's because Papa wanted to give up all the carts to the wounded," said Petya. "Vasilich told me. I consider…"

"I consider," Natasha suddenly almost shouted, turning her angry face to Petya, "I consider it so horrid, so abominable, so… I don't know what. Are we despicable Germans?"

Her throat quivered with convulsive sobs and, afraid of weakening and letting the force of her anger run to waste, she turned and rushed headlong up the stairs. Berg was sitting beside the countess consoling her with the respectful attention of a relative. The count, pipe in hand, was pacing up and down the room, when Natasha, her face distorted by anger, burst in like a tempest and approached her mother with rapid steps.

"It's horrid! It's abominable!" she screamed. "You can't possibly have ordered it!" Berg and the countess looked at her, perplexed and frightened. The count stood still at the window and listened.

"Mamma, it's impossible: see what is going on in the yard!" she cried. "They will be left!..."

"What's the matter with you? Who are 'they'? What do you want?"

"Why, the wounded! It's impossible, Mamma. It's monstrous!... No, Mamma darling, it's not the thing. Please forgive me, darling… Mamma, what does it matter what we take away? Only look what is going on in the yard … Mamma!... It's impossible!"

The count stood by the window and listened without turning round. Suddenly he sniffed and put his face closer to the window. The countess glanced at her daughter, saw her face full of shame for her mother, saw her agitation, and understood why her husband did not turn to look at her now, and she glanced round quite disconcerted.

"Oh, do as you like! Am I hindering anyone?" she said, not surrendering at once.

"Mamma, darling, forgive me!"

But the countess pushed her daughter away and went up to her husband.

"My dear, you order what is right…. You know I don't understand about it," said she, dropping her eyes shamefacedly.

'The eggs … the eggs are teaching the hen …" muttered the count through tears of joy, and he embraced his wife who was glad to hide her look of shame on his breast. (*PSS* 11: 312-314)

Thus the reciprocal and mutually enriching dialogue between mother and daughter that we have discussed earlier in detail continues up to the final pages of the novel and, as in the above example, is reversed when the teacher receives a lesson from the student. It is Natasha's consciousness of freedom from everything artificial and superfluous in life, her freedom from life's decorum and her youthful maximalism that makes it so easy for her to cut the Gordian knot of her parents' moral dilemma. Petya is probably the closest to Natasha of the male members of the Rostov family in regards to the personality and behavior traits. He is a representative of the same life by the heart instinct – impulsive but, nevertheless, endowed with that finely tuned moral compass which guides all his actions within the family circle and outside it. After a tremendous effort of persuading his parents to let him go to war, Petya joins his regiment and is soon taken as orderly by a general commanding a large guerrilla detachment. He experiences a constant state of blissful excitement at being grown-up and is in a perpetual ecstatic hurry not to miss any chance to do something really heroic. One day he is dispatched to Denisov's partisan group and finds himself in the company of experienced war old-timers such as Dolokhov, Denisov and other battle-hardened officers. Petya, a greenhorn, is anxious to prove and establish himself in this man club and is terribly afraid to seem ridiculous, boyish, soft or womanly sensitive. Nevertheless, even the fear of ridicule from fellow officers does not stop him from showing human compassion toward a young French captive and revealing that core moral constant so deeply engrained in him which Tolstoy considered the springs of human ethical conduct:

> Then suddenly, dismayed lest he had said too much, Petya stopped and blushed. He tried to remember whether he had not done anything else that was foolish. And running over the events of the day he remembered the French drummer boy. "It's capital for us here, but what of him? Where have they put him? Have they fed him? Haven't they hurt his feelings?" he thought. But having caught himself saying too much about the flints, he was now afraid to speak out.
>
> "I might ask," he thought, "but they'll say: 'He's a boy himself and so he pities the boy.' I'll show them tomorrow whether I'm a boy. Will it seem odd if I ask?" Petya thought. 'Well, never mind!" and immediately, blushing and looking anxiously at the officers to see if they appeared ironical, he said:
>
> "May I call in that boy who was taken prisoner and give him something to eat? … Perhaps …"
>
> "Yes, he's a poor little fellow," said Denisov, who evidently saw nothing shameful in this reminder. "Call him in. His name is Vincent Bosse. Have him fetched."…
> The sound of bare feet splashing through the mud was heard in the darkness, and the drummer boy came to the door.
>
> "Ah, c'est vous [Ah, it's you]!" said Petya. "Voulez-vous manger? N'ayez pas peur, on ne vous fera pas de mal [Do you want something to eat? Don't be afraid, they won't hurt you]," he added shyly and affectionately, touching the boy's hand. "Entrez, entrez [Come in, come in]."
>
> "Merci, monsieur [Thank you, sir]," said the drummer boy in a trembling almost childish voice, and he began scraping his dirty feet on the threshold. There were many things Petya wanted to say to the drummer boy, but did not dare to. He stood irresolutely beside him in the passage. Then in the darkness he took the boy's hand and pressed it.
>
> "Come in, come in!" he repeated in a gentle whisper. "Oh, what can I do for him?" he thought, and opening the door he let the boy pass in first. When the boy had entered the hut, Petya sat down at a distance from him, considering it beneath his dignity to pay attention to him. But he fingered the money in his pocket and wondered whether it would seem ridiculous to give some to the drummer boy. (*PSS* 12: 82-83)

Tolstoy conceived of the whole educational process as a practical realization of the spirit of altruism and practice of active love. His entire philosophy of education was permeated by the ethico-religious spirit and he continuously sought to realize his religious and moral ideals through every activity of the schooling process. Tolstoy believed in a paramount role of the educator in nurturing the spirit of faith and the promotion of its ethical imperatives. According to Tolstoy perhaps the most important task of the teacher in connection with the process of moral and ethico-religious education, as becomes evident from his Yasnaya Polyana school reports, was the awakening in his students of love for the Scriptures, and the development of their ability to comprehend

the meaning of the revealed word, and to determine its relevance in the conditions of their daily lives. In his essay "The Yasnaya Polyana School in the Months of November and December" Tolstoy recounts his experience of the teaching of sacred history. As with any other subjects that he taught at the school, he tried various approaches and experimented with a great number of materials but only when he presented The Old Testament to his students, he felt that he truly tapped into the right teaching method and was able to reach and make an impact on the children. Tolstoy testifies that "The Old Testament was remembered at once and retold with passion and delight both in the classroom and at home, and impressed itself so upon their memories that two months after the telling children were writing sacred history in their exercise books out of their own heads with extremely insignificant omissions" (*PSS* 8: 86). He sincerely believed that it is impossible to educate a young person and to impart to him a love for knowledge without "the book of the childhood of the human race." Tolstoy spoke of the Bible not only as a sacred text, but also as the most poetic and aesthetically stimulating book ever written in the history of human kind:

> In order to open up a new world to the pupil and without knowledge to make him conceive a love for knowledge no book will do but the Bible. I speak even for those who do not look upon the Bible as revelation. No, I at least know of no work which unites in itself in such compressed poetic form all the aspects of human thought which are united in the Bible. All questions concerning natural phenomena are explained by this book, all primary relationships amongst people, families, states and religions are perceived for the first time through this book. Generalizations of thought, wisdom, in a form of childlike simplicity, for the first time captivate the pupil's intellect with their charm. The lyricism of the psalms of David is effective not only on the minds of adult pupils but, more than this, everyone recognizes in this book for the first time all the charm of the epic, in inimitable simplicity and power.
> …The development of child and man is unthinkable without the Bible in our society, just as it would have been unthinkable in Greek society without Homer. The Bible is the only book for beginners' and children's reading. The Bible, in form as in content, must serve as a model for all primers and reading books for children. A translation of the Bible into the language of the common people would be the best book for the people. The

> appearance of such a translation in our day would constitute an epoch in the history of the Russian people. (*PSS* 8: 88-89)

The particular appeal of the Bible, as has been mentioned, lay in the richness of its aesthetic content and this, to a considerable degree, determined the pedagogic methods that Tolstoy employed in his teaching of not only sacred history but also all other subjects in his school. He believed that all learning is aesthetic in origin and, therefore, can be most effectively nurtured through the development of aesthetic potential. He discovered the power of narrative evocation to stimulate their interest and to foster their imaginative creativity, giving particular attention to oral discussion. In addition to the oral activities, Tolstoy generally favored teaching methods which encouraged the children to narrate their impressions of the Biblical text through the medium of their own writing. In his Yasnaya Polyana school essays Tolstoy provides numerous examples of extracts from his students' written accounts of the Biblical stories that indicate not only a mature grasp of the narrative but an ability, unusual for children of eight-ten years old, to convey the interplay of character and the exchanges of dialogue in vivid and fluent prose. These excerpts fully confirm Tolstoy's claim that his students "fell in love with the book, with the study, and with me" (*PSS* 8: 88).

We find a similar description of the evocative power of the narrative *War and Peace* in connection with Platon Karataev and Pierre Bezukhov, whose main pleasure during captivity becomes listening to Karataev's folk tales and stories of real life which he admires greatly for their moral beauty and a sense of profound wisdom. We find the following characteristic of Platon's speech and his gift of story-telling, which closely

resembles Tolstoy's descriptions of lessons enriched by his own narrations for his students:

> The proverbs, of which his talk was full, were for the most part not the coarse and indecent saws soldiers employ, but those folk sayings which taken without a context seem so insignificant, but when used appositely suddenly acquire a significance of profound wisdom.
>
> He would often say the exact opposite of what he had said on a previous occasion, yet both would be right. He liked to talk and he talked well, adorning his speech with terms of endearment and with folk sayings which Pierre thought he invented himself, but the chief charm of his talk lay in the fact that the commonest events – sometimes just such as Pierre had witnessed without taking notice of them – assumed in Karataev's speech a character of solemn fitness. He liked to hear the folk tales one of the soldiers used to tell of an evening (they were always the same), but most of all he liked to hear stories of real life. He would smile joyfully when listening to such stories, now and then putting in a word or asking a question to make the moral beauty of what he was told clear to himself. (*PSS* 12: 51).

A little later in the novel Tolstoy further develops the theme of the narrative evocation and its powerful moral and aesthetic influence upon the listener. It is revealed in the episode where Platon Karataev tells a tale of an old merchant who was wrongly accused of a murder, punished and sent to hard labor in Siberia. This tale acquires the quality of a parable in Karataev's interpretation and Platon himself sitting by a campfire resembles a priest "covered up – head and all – with his greatcoat as if it were a vestment", telling a story of suffering and forgiveness of injuries to his fellow prisoners, similarly to Tolstoy telling the story of the Last Supper and Christ's Crucifixion to his pupils during one of their sacred history lessons. Reading this description, it becomes unmistakable what paramount significance Tolstoy ascribed to the skill of oral narration in general, as one of the oldest art forms, and particularly to the narration of the Scriptures that have such a great potential for moral and spiritual guidance. The episode is presented to the reader through Pierre's perception as the physical sufferings he is

experiencing in captivity becomes superseded by the spiritual joy and mysterious significance evoked in him by Platon's story:[7]

> It seemed to him [Pierre] that he was thinking of nothing, but far down and deep within him his soul was occupied with something important and comforting. This something was a most subtle spiritual deduction from a conversation with Karataev the day before.
>
> At their yesterday's halting place, feeling chilly by a dying campfire, Pierre had got up and gone to the next one, which was burning better. There Platon Karataev was sitting covered up – head and all – with his greatcoat as if it were a vestment, telling the soldiers in his effective and pleasant though now feeble voice a story Pierre knew. It was already past midnight, the hour when Karataev was usually free of his fever and particularly lively. When Pierre reached the fire and heard Platon's voice enfeebled by illness, and saw his pathetic face brightly lit up by the blaze, he felt a painful prick at his heart. His feeling of pity for this man frightened him and he wished to go away, but there was no other fire, and Pierre sat down, trying not to look at Platon.
>
> "Well, how are you? He asked.
>
> "How am I? If we grumble at sickness, God won't grant us death," replied Platon, and at once resumed the story he had begun.
>
> "And so, brother," he continued, with a smile on his pale emaciated face and a particularly happy light in his eyes, "you see, brother…"
>
> Pierre had long been familiar with that story. Karataev had told it to him alone some half-dozen times and always with a specially joyful emotion. But well as he knew it, Pierre now listened to that tale as to something new, and the quiet rapture Karataev evidently felt as he told it communicated itself also to Pierre. The story was of an old merchant who lived a good and God-fearing life with his family, and who went once to the Nizhni fair with a companion – a rich merchant. Having put up at an inn they both went to sleep, and next morning his companion was found robbed and with his throat cut. A bloodstained knife was found under the old merchant's pillow. He was tried, knouted, and his nostrils having been torn off, "all in due form" as Karataev put it, he was sent to hard labor in Siberia.
>
> "And so, brother" (it was at this point that Pierre came up), "ten years or more passed by. The old man was living as a convict, submitting as he should and doing no wrong. Only he prayed to God for death. Well, one night the convicts were gathered just as we are, with the old man among them. And they began telling what each was suffering for, and how they had sinned against God. One told how he had taken a life, another had taken two, a third had set a house on fire, while another had simply been a vagrant and had done nothing. So they asked the old man: 'What are you being punished for, Daddy?' – 'I, my dear brothers,' said he, 'am being punished for my own and other men's sins. But I have not killed anyone or taken anything that was not mine, but have only helped my poorer brothers. I was a merchant, my dear brothers, and had much property.' And he went on to tell them all about it in due order. 'I don't grieve for myself,' he says, 'God, it seems, has chastened me. Only I am sorry for my old wife and the children,' and the old man began to weep. Now it happened that in the group was the very man who had killed the other merchant. 'Where did it happen, Daddy? He said. 'When, and in what month?' He asked all about it and his heart began to ache. So he

[7] The tale Karataev tells was a particular favorite of Tolstoy's. he wrote it out much more fully under the title of *God Sees the Truth But Speaks not Soon.* In *What is Art?* he refers to it as being in his opinion one of the two best he ever wrote, as regards its subject matter of forgiveness of injuries.

> comes up to the old man like this, and falls down at his feet! 'You are perishing because of me, Daddy,' he says. 'It's quite true, lads, that this man,' he says, 'is being tortured innocently and for nothing! I,' he says, 'did that deed, and I put the knife under your head while you were asleep. Forgive me, Daddy,' he says, 'for Christ's sake!'"
>
> Karataev paused, smiling joyously as he gazed into the fire, and he drew the logs together.
>
> "And the old man said, 'God will forgive you, we are all sinners in His sight. I suffer for my own sins,' and he wept bitter tears. Well, and what do you think, dear friends?" Karataev continued, his face brightening more and more with a rapturous smile as if what he now had to tell contained the chief charm and the whole meaning of his story: "What do you think, dear fellows? That murderer confessed to the authorities. 'I have taken six lives,' he says (he was a great sinner), 'but what I am most sorry for is this old man. Don't let him suffer because of me.' So he confessed and it was all written down and the papers sent off in due form. The place was a long way off, and while they were judging, what with one thing and another, filling in the papers all in due form – the authorities I mean – time passed. The affair reached the Tsar. After a while the Tsar's decree came: to set the merchant free and give him a compensation that had been awarded. The paper arrived and they began to look for the old man. 'Where is the old man who has been suffering innocently and in vain? A paper has come from the Tsar!' So they began looking for him," here Karataev's lower jaw trembled, "but God had already forgiven him – he was dead! That's how it was, dear fellows!" Karataev concluded and sat for a long time silent, gazing before him with a smile.
>
> And Pierre's soul was dimly but joyfully filled not by the story itself but by its mysterious significance: by the rapturous joy that lit up Karataev's face as he told it, and the mystic significance of that joy. (*PSS* 12: 55-56)

AESTHETIC EDUCATION – MUSIC ON THE PAGES OF WAR AND PEACE

Tolstoy recognized the importance of an aesthetic harmony as the foundation of all moral, religious, cultural and intellectual development and proclaimed the right of all children to have access to the richness of their cultural, and specifically their aesthetic heritage. In his Yasnaya Polyana essays Tolstoy insisted that peasant children should be given the same opportunities as more privileged children to develop their creative abilities through the medium of fine arts. He scorned the view that art education for common people should be restricted to rudimentary exercises in technical drawing or singing in a church choir. He argued that "the urge to enjoy art and to serve art are to be found in every human personality, no matter what breed and environment it may belong

to, and that this urge implies rights and must be satisfied" (*PSS* 8: 115). Tolstoy dedicated a large section in his Yasnaya Polyana essay to the description of his experiments in teaching drawing and singing and opened it up with the following introduction:

> But for the fact that in my view we do not know what we should teach this or that person and why, I should be obliged to ask myself whether it will be of use to peasant children, placed in a situation where they will have to spend their whole lives in concern about their daily bread, to learn the arts, and what they want with them? Ninety-nine out of a hundred would reply to that question and reply in the negative. And no other answer can be given. As soon as this sort of question is posed common sense demands this sort of answer: he is not going to be an artist, he will have to plough. If he has artistic urges he will not have the strength to sustain that stubborn, unrelenting work which he needs to sustain, which would render the existence of the state unthinkable if he did not sustain it. In saying 'he', I mean the child of the people. This is indeed an absurdity, but I rejoice in this absurdity, I do not come to a halt in front of it but try to find its causes. There is another, yet worse absurdity. This same son of the people – every son of the people – has just the same rights, what am I saying? even greater rights to the enjoyment of art than we children of a fortunate social class who are not forced to undertake that unrelenting work and who are surrounded by all the comforts of life. (*PSS* 8: 110)

Tolstoy's belief in the need for all children to have a good education in the arts was rooted in the deeper conviction that all understanding is aesthetic in origin, and that the nurturing of learning potential depends ultimately on the enrichment of the imaginative resources of the learner. However, Tolstoy understood and foresaw the same problems in teaching fine arts and music to peasant children as encountered in the case with fine literature. He saw a great gulf between popular taste and the sophisticated traditions of high art and continuously sought all possible means for bridging it. Judging from his reports, Tolstoy very effectively utilized the natural progression from folk to art music in his lessons starting with the spontaneous singing of the children, he led them gradually to different varieties of music and even taught them the basics of musical literacy. His pupils were given a good basic training in choral singing and vocal skills as

well as in the playing of popular instruments. They were offered a varied repertoire, with a good blending of folk and religious music, and every effort was made to ensure that the primary aim of fostering a love for music was pursued continuously. Tolstoy never allowed the instruction in the basic skills, be it reading, writing or music, to override the main objective of learning as he understood it – that is to be enjoyable and cheerful. He insisted that the teacher should ensure that at all times the children found their music lessons entertaining and pleasurable. Therefore, he argued that "if music teaching is to leave some trace and be willingly accepted it is essential to teach art from the very beginning and not skill in singing or playing. It may be possible to teach young ladies to play Burgmüller's exercises, but children of the people had better not be taught at all than taught mechanically" (*PSS* 8: 125).

The same attitude of the author towards music is clearly discernable in *War and Peace* where Tolstoy repeatedly emphasizes Natasha's imperfect singing skills which, however, does not prevent her from producing the most stunning, almost mesmerizing effect upon her listeners, often moving them to tears. On the contrary, Tolstoy seems to imply that those very imperfections in connection with her naturally beautiful and untrained voice devoid of any artificiality, enable Natasha to bring her listeners such enjoyment from music and endow her singing with the powerful cathartic effect. Perhaps one of the most memorable examples of such view of music is given to us by the author in the episode of Natasha's singing at the time when her brother Nicholas has returned home after a devastating loss in cards to Dolokhov. He finds himself on the edge of suicide when in a matter of minutes his world is transformed by Natasha's singing,

something that was finest in his soul has been touched and resonated to the music and he is brought back to life, or rather transported:

> "And what is she so pleased about?" thought Nicholas, looking at his sister. "Why isn't she dull and ashamed?"
>
> Natasha took the first note, her throat swelled, her chest rose, her eyes became serious. At that moment she was oblivious of her surroundings, and from her smiling lips flowed sounds which anyone may produce at the same intervals and hold for the same time, but which leave you cold a thousand times and the thousand and first time thrill you and make you weep.
>
> Natasha, that winter, had for the first time begun to sing seriously, mainly because Denisov so delighted in her singing. She no longer sang as a child, there was no longer in her singing that comical, childish, painstaking effect that had been in it before; but she did not yet sing well, as all the connoisseurs who heard her said: "It is not trained, but it is a beautiful voice that must be trained." Only they generally said this some time after she had finished singing. While that untrained voice, with its incorrect breathing and labored transitions, was sounding, even the connoisseurs said nothing, but only delighted in it and wished to hear it again. In her voice there was virginality, freshness, an unconsciousness of her own powers, and an as yet untrained velvety softness, which so mingled with her lack of art in singing that it seemed as if nothing in that voice could be altered without spoiling it.
>
> "What is this?" thought Nicholas, listening to her with widely opened eyes. "What has happened to her? How she is singing today!" And suddenly the whole world centered for him on anticipation of the next note, the next phrase, and everything in the world was divided into three beats: *"Oh mio crudele affetto."* ... One, two, three…One… *"Oh mio crudele affetto."* …One, two, three…One. "Oh, this senseless life of ours!" thought Nicholas. "All this misery, and money, and Dolokhov, and anger, and honor – it's all nonsense…but this is real…. Now then, Natasha, now then, dearest! Now then, darling! How will she take that *si*? She's taken it! Thank God!" And without noticing that he was singing, to strengthen the *si* he sung a second, a third below the high note. "Ah, God! How fine! Did I really take it? How fortunate!" he thought.
>
> Oh, how that chord vibrated, and how moved was something that was finest in Rostov's soul! And this something was apart from everything else in the world and above everything in the world. (*PSS* 10: 59-60)

It is evident from the Yasnaya Polyana school reports that the starting point for Tolstoy's music lessons at the school was the spontaneous singing of the children that he witnessed during one of their walks which led him to the idea of organized singing lessons. In his description of the episode it is significant that Tolstoy particularly admires the uninhibited and unrehearsed quality of their singing, their ability to communicate feelings and emotions with the song – the same qualities with which Natasha Rostova is

so richly gifted in her singing. The following descriptions is not only extremely poetic but most importantly, as in the case with all of such lyrical digressions in the essays, is the best expression of Tolstoy's pedagogical and aesthetic views, as well as the most striking observations:

> Last summer we were coming back from bathing. We were all feeling very gay. A peasant boy, the same one as had been tempted by the domestic servant's son into stealing books, a thickset boy with wide cheek-bones, covered all over in freckles, with crooked legs turned inwards, having all the mannerisms of an adult peasant of the steppes, but an intelligent, strong and gifted nature, ran forward and took a seat in a cart which was driving in front of us. He took the reins, pushed his hat askew, spat to one side and burst out in some long-drawn-out peasant song – and how he sang! – feelingly, with intermittent pauses and sudden bursts of song. The lads burst out laughing. 'Look at Syomka, look at Syomka, doesn't he play it fine?' Syomka was completely serious. 'Here you, don't interrupt the song,' he said during an interval in a special, deliberately husky voice and gravely continued his singing. Two of the most musical boys took seats on the cart, began to seek harmonies and sang them. One was harmonizing now in an eight, now in a sixth, the other in a third, and it turned out excellently. Then other boys came up and began to sing, 'As under such an apple tree'; they started shouting and the result was noisy but no good. The singing began with that evening; now, after eight months, we sing, 'An angel cried out' and two cherubim pieces – numbers four and seven, all the usual mass and short choral songs. The best pupils (only two of them) write down the melodies of songs that they know and can almost read music. But so far everything they sing is a great deal less good than their song when they were coming back from bathing. (*PSS* 8: 119-120)

In *War and Peace* we find a continuation of this motif and further exploration of the idea of the pure, original and unspoiled qualities of folk music. In the memorable episode of the evening at uncle's after the hunt, Tolstoy creates a magical and charming atmosphere of a warm, spontaneous and uninhibited celebration filled with folk music, traditional dancing and singing. Everybody joins in the festivities: Nicholas, the uncle, Mitka-coachman and Anisya Fyodorovna, but Natasha with her artistic cognition of life is especially overtaken by the unrefined daring, infectiousness and sensibility of the folk music. The sound of the balalaika tune played by Mitka is perceived by her as the acme

of musical delight and her Russian dance enables her to erase, though temporarily, the centuries of division and inequality between the masters and servants. The description of uncle's singing is strangely evocative of the peasant children's singing and his manner is favorably compared to the natural, bird-like peasant manner of singing:

> Uncle played another song and a valse; then after a pause he cleared his throat and sang his favorite hunting song:
> *As 'twas growing dark last night*
> *Fell the snow so soft and light …*
> Uncle sang as peasants sing, with full and naïve conviction that the whole meaning of a song lies in the words and that the tune comes of itself, and that apart from the words there is no tune, which exists only to give measure to the words. As a result of this the unconsidered tune, like the song of a bird, was extraordinarily good. Natasha was in ecstasies over uncle's singing. She resolved to give up learning the harp and to play only the guitar. She asked uncle for his guitar and at once found the chords of the song. (*PSS* 10: 268)

The same motif of a bird-like, unrehearsed and natural quality of folk singing is repeated in the description of Platon Karataev's manner: "He did not sing like a trained singer who knows he is listened to, but like the birds, evidently giving vent to the sounds in the same way that one stretches oneself or walks about to get rid of stiffness, and the sounds were always high-pitched, mournful, delicate, and almost feminine, and his face at such times was very serious" (*PSS* 12: 53). In his Yasnaya Polyana school essay, in the section dedicated to the teaching of drawing and music, Tolstoy makes some insightful observations comparing the diverging tendencies in the folk and fine arts. He argues that a purer quality exists in the music of the people than in its more sophisticated classical forms and comes to the conclusion that a true, natural beauty that they possess is accessible to everyone and requires no special training:

> I am convinced that a lyric poem like, for instance, 'I remember a wonderful moment' and musical works like Beethoven's last symphony have not such an unqualified and

> universal beauty as the song of 'Steward Van'ka' and the melody of 'Down the Mother Volga', that Pushkin and Beethoven please us not because they have an absolute beauty but because we are just as corrupt as Pushkin and Beethoven, because Pushkin and Beethoven alike flatter our freaky irritability and our weakness. How often we hear that paradox, battered to the point of utter banality, that a certain training is necessary for an understanding of the beautiful – who said this? Why?, by what is it proved? It is only a device, a way of escape from an impasse which the misdirection and the attachment of our art to one class have led us into. Why is it that the beauty of the sun, the beauty of the human face, the beauty of an act of love and self-sacrifice are accessible to everyone and demand no training? (*PSS* 8: 114)

This observation was a forerunner of his influential tract *What is Art?* (1897) which became the product of prolonged reflection on the nature and purpose of art. In this much later work Tolstoy expressed his deep belief that the importance of art lies not in its purely aesthetic qualities but in its connection with life, and that it becomes decadent when that connection is lost. He argued that the doctrine of "art for art's sake" is a theory that merely panders to the decadent interests of the wealthy classes that have become estranged from religion and indifferent to morality, and in order to provide meaning in their lives require increasingly rarefied forms of amusement. Tolstoy points out that this pleasure is accessible only to a certain class of people with certain highly specialized kinds of education, thus reiterating the same sentiment that he has expressed thirty six years earlier in his Yasnaya Polyana school essay. Tolstoy insisted that all good art is related to the authentic life of the broader community and that the aesthetic value of a work of art should not be independent of its moral content. He believed that pure aestheticism trivialized art by rendering it into mere entertainment for a few chosen ones, and therefore, reinforced the alienation separating different strata of society. Tolstoy expressed his deepest conviction that genuine art should have a potential to forge connections and communities among people, as it entails the transmission of the artist's

feelings to others, who by means of the artwork become infected and thus share those feelings. We might say that this perception of genuine, authentic art is naturally and intrinsically connected with Tolstoy's educational philosophy and his pedagogical efforts at the Yasnaya Polyana school as he profoundly believed in the unity and universality of aesthetic-religious truth and its accessibility to all of mankind.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

Tolstoy's vision of education seems remarkably profound, far-seeing and comprehensive nowadays. What particularly commends his pedagogy to the modern educator is not only his emphasis on the individuality of the learner, his championing of learning as a process of freely oriented enquiry and opposition to compulsive methods of teaching, but also his insistence on the universal right to education. He fully recognized the importance of an aesthetic harmony as the foundation of all learning, and sought to develop creative potential in his pupils, utilizing the resources of literary, visual and musical art-forms to achieve this objective. Tolstoy conceived of the whole educational process as a reciprocal dialogue between the teacher and the learner conducted in the spirit of mutual love and respect and constantly strove to accommodate the mutually constraining ideals of freedom and order, informality and discipline in his school. He advocated what from a modern standpoint would be defined as an eclectic methodology, embracing both exploratory and instructional approaches. The identification of aesthetic and intellectual understanding was the central principle of Tolstoy's educational philosophy which informed and inspired not only his pedagogical activities at the Yasnaya Polyana school but also all of his literary works. All the central principles of Tolstoy's educational thought such as his pedagogy of freedom, his ideas of aesthetic education through reading, art and music, his religious and moral education found their artistic reflections on the pages of his most encompassing work - *War and Peace.* His pedagogical writings and practical educational activities not only greatly informed the creation if this epic masterwork but have become a source of creative conceptualization

for the novel. Tolstoy's original, humane and practical vision of education has anticipated some of the most leading principles of our contemporary educational theory and commends a great deal to a modern educator. As a practicing school teacher he tested and exemplified the effectiveness of his educational ideals in the context of actual classroom practice, providing a great amount of specific methodology and pedagogic guidance in his pedagogical writings, particularly in the spheres of reading, writing, art and music education, and in the teaching of the scriptures, all of which compares remarkably well with modern developments in each of these fields.

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Vita

Nadya Yurievna Clayton was born on November 2, 1975 in Kostroma, Russia. She is the daughter of Nelly Voshchenkova and Yuri Voshchenkov. After finishing secondary school in Norilsk, she attended Kaluga State Pedagogical University, where she consecutively received a Bachelor of Arts in Humanities with a Major in Foreign Languages in 1995, and a Master of Arts with honors in English, French and Russian Language Pedagogy in 1997. In August 2003, she entered the Graduate School of the University of Texas at Austin, where she has been studying Slavic literature and culture and teaching Russian language courses at the Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies.

Permanent address: 2716 Barton Creek Blvd., Apt. 1323
Austin, Texas 78735

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